

CRANFIELD UNIVERSITY

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**THE CAREER BENEFITS OF AN MBA FOR BRITISH
AND TAIWANESE WOMEN MANAGERS: ADOPTING A
CAREER-CAPITAL PERSPECTIVE**

SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

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and Taiwanese women managers:
adopting a career-capital perspective**

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Abstract

This research aims to identify the career benefits which female graduates have acquired from taking an MBA programme in the UK and Taiwan. It builds on a stream of knowledge about male and female MBA graduates' career competencies as a result of completing the MBA and adopts a career-capital perspective. The qualitative data emerging from the 36 interviews and the stratified sample of six business schools in the UK and Taiwan which make up the study offer a rich understanding of how women perceive their career benefits. It redresses the previous focus on quantitative data from a single sample and a concentration on objective career outcomes such as salary and promotions.

The findings show that all female participants acquired career capital. Junior and middle managers (British women, aged between 30 and 34) focused on the acquisition of human and cultural capital and, in particular, on growth in confidence and salary as well as career advancement. Middle and senior managers (British and Taiwan women, aged between 35 and 40) concentrated more on the acquisition of social capital, in terms of networks, than the attainment of human and cultural capital. Senior managers (Taiwanese women, aged between 41 and 45) benefited from the acquisition of social capital in terms of networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends. The differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese women are explained in terms of cultural backgrounds (British and Taiwanese) and the characteristics of each individual in terms of age and managerial experience. Gaining confidence and improved career status leading to salary increases, management promotions, career opportunities and personal reputation was seen as the most important to the British women. Networking with talented people (alumni, faculty, peers and friends) leading to gaining visibility in senior management, seeking career advice, career planning and career advancement, acquiring sponsors, sharing knowledge, exchanging information, extending contacts, acquiring professional support, a source of learning and other commercial benefits (for example, gaining a deeper understanding of customers) were critical to the Taiwanese women.

The research has attempted to add to the knowledge about career capital by redefining the concepts of human, social and cultural capital and reorganizing the dimensions within each concept. Human capital is defined as educational attainment, consisting of knowledge, skills and confidence. Social capital is captured by networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends. Cultural capital is developed through the value

which society places on symbols of prestige and is defined as improved career status. It has also attempted to offer empirical evidence to add to the existing literature on women's career benefits from taking an MBA and how they relate to career stage (early and mid-career) and cultural background (British and Taiwanese). It has helped in shaping an understanding of how women leverage the MBA to develop managerial careers in their thirties and forties. It has also filled a gap in the research on female MBA graduates in Taiwan. Previous work does not devote much attention to the cultural factors in cross-cultural studies while this research has shown how collectivism in Taiwan and individualism in the UK have an impact on the career outcomes of female graduates. Future research is needed to extend the study of what career benefits graduates from different countries gain from MBA studies in order that global programmes run in the UK cater to the needs of all students.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts by explaining my interest in the topic and outlining the research objectives. The research question is related to the perspective of career capital, recently developed theories of the various stages of women's careers and the career benefits of undertaking an MBA programme. The last section summarizes the chapters of this thesis.

1.1 The origins of the research: a personal journey

This research is the result of a strong personal interest in what career benefits women gain from taking an MBA programme. The aim is to understand better the career outcomes that women have acquired from the programme and, in the process, to help those who have been struggling to decide whether to embark on an MBA programme.

My interest in the subject has developed over a long period. Initially, I studied on an Executive MBA course at a British business school in the mid-1990s before returning to Taiwan to start my academic career. When the course was finished, I was in my late twenties and my corporate experiences were similar to those of many British female MBA graduates of my age and educational background. Soon after completing the course, I came to the realization that I would never become an entrepreneur; nevertheless, the personal contacts I made on the course were invaluable in subsequent years. I have maintained contact with fellow British classmates and faculty members within the business school such as Professor Ben Fletcher and Charles Parkin. Prior to joining Cranfield School of Management, these colleagues kindly invited me to stay with them on UK visits. Last year, Charles and his partner read some of the results derived from my British sample. They offered their opinions which helped me to reflect on the findings from this research. Both Charles and I concurred that the Executive MBA programme provided us with managerial skills and business theory which working managers needed in the workplace.

In broad terms, I valued the Executive MBA experience and it equipped me with knowledge and skills and, in particular, networks with British business managers which were invaluable assets. I taught my students in a Taiwanese business school, often using many notes and books acquired during the Executive MBA programme. In the lecture room, I was asked what I had gained from studying the MBA as a female student.

No empirical research on female Executive MBA graduates has been conducted in Taiwan. This doctoral research is largely inspired by those female students who take business and management studies, and are keen to know how management education helps them to build and to develop managerial careers.

It is also the product of conversations with female friends in Taiwan who had studied the MBA programme and who had told me that the course had made everyone think about themselves. Many of them gained a deeper understanding of who they are and what they could do as women in the business world. External career success (salary increases or job promotions) was seen as important to working women's career development. Building and acquiring inner strengths seemed more critical to women who were discriminated against in their work organisations.

I grew up in a small, loving family. My father studied engineering at Leeds University in the 1970s. Unlike many children from Chinese families, I was fortunate enough to have parents who did not think that there were limits to what a girl could do. My parents have been hugely important in shaping who I have become. At home I was encouraged to express myself in what I wanted and needed. I was a quiet and hardworking pupil at school. It is part of Chinese culture that respect tends to be more readily given to women if they are submissive. Previously, I lacked the confidence required to argue and/or defend myself in front of people that I did not know. Studying for the PhD has developed my character and views on the roles which women can play in executive positions.

The academic research at the International Centre for Women Leaders, where I am working, focuses on the issues facing senior female managers and the impact of organizational and personal factors on women's managerial careers. The research projects of my peers fall into a number of themes such as role models and flexible working. There is an opportunity to share academic research findings through quarterly meetings. The common interest appears to be concentrated on the issues of women's career stages, balance of work and family demands as well as the breaking of the so-called 'glass ceiling'. Everyone in the centre believes that our research will help female managers to break down barriers of male dominance in business and promote the senior roles of women in management. At an individual level, conducting the doctoral research has proved to be a journey of personal development. Attending lunchtime seminars and presenting research findings in the doctoral colloquium help me to build confidence and to improve techniques of defending my work. Making presentations and receiving feedback from audiences at international

conferences has developed my confidence. I am thrilled to find that my research on female Executive MBA graduates in the UK and Taiwan is widely appreciated.

Finally, the personal stories of female Executive MBA graduates who have participated in these qualitative semi-structured interviews are intriguing and inspiring. These stories have deepened an understanding of the MBA education and its impact on female managers. This adds to the strength of my belief in conducting this research.

1.2 The objectives of the research

“Women hold up half the sky.” (Mao Zedong)

Numbers of female enrolments on the MBA in the UK and US are low (Alsop, 2007) despite efforts by business schools to attract more female students (Catalyst, 2000; The Economist, 2003; Alsop, 2006; Bradshaw, 2007). MBA programmes in Asia attract increasingly significant numbers of female managers (Newsweek, 2008, The Financial Times, 2008). Business schools in Taiwan are classified as part of the humanities and social sciences, and these faculties recruit many female students (Cheng and Liao, 1994). When this doctoral research began in 2004, the Financial Times reported that 76 MBA courses were on offer from 36 business schools in Taiwan, which had a population of just 23 million (Bradshaw, 2004). A Taiwanese survey in the Business Week (2004) showed that the proportion of female MBA students was 22 percent at the beginning of the 1980s. This had increased to 40 percent by the end of the 1990s, way ahead of the British and North American economies. The debate on the small percentage of women on MBA programmes in developed countries has been widely discussed (Hammond and Holton, 1993; Catalyst, 2000; The Economist, 2003; Alsop, 2007; Bradshaw, 2007), yet there has been nothing written about the significant increases in women on MBA programmes in emerging economies. A comparison between the UK and Taiwan is, therefore, timely.

British researchers on MBA graduates' career success have suggested that using qualitative methods to explore the career benefits which the graduates perceived from completing the degree enabled them to explore in depth women's experiences, building on existing quantitative research on the career outcomes after taking the MBA programme (Sturges, Simpson and Altman, 2003). Following Sturges and her associates' approach, this doctoral study seeks to further the research into female managers' career benefits from taking an MBA. It aims to uncover the differences (if any) between British and Taiwanese women as regards career benefits from the MBA programme and to find out the causes of these differences.

Many concerns about career benefits are related to opportunities for career advancement and significant salary growth (Simpson 2000; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Reitman and Schneer, 2005). This research aims to examine the female Executive MBA graduates' motivations, experiences and outcomes as a result of completing the programme in relation to their career development. A realist and feminist approach is adopted, with qualitative semi-structured interviews. In addition, information from each business school's website was collected with regard to the profiles of Executive MBA students. The research attempts to answer why there are differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese female graduates.

1.3 Career theory and its changing context

Economic theorists suggest that employees need to accumulate human capital for employment (Bergman, 1986; Blau and Ferber, 1986). Traditional career theories have mainly been based upon men's experiences and their career development (Calas and Smircich, 1996; Mavin and Bryans, 1999), which is usually uninterrupted. Women take on different roles in life; their career histories include family commitment, particularly childcare (Adler, 1993; Omar and Davidson, 2001; Venter, 2002; Tanova et al., 2008; Rowley and Yukongdi, 2009). Generally, there are three career stages in working women's life: early, middle and late. Women have different needs at each stage (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005).

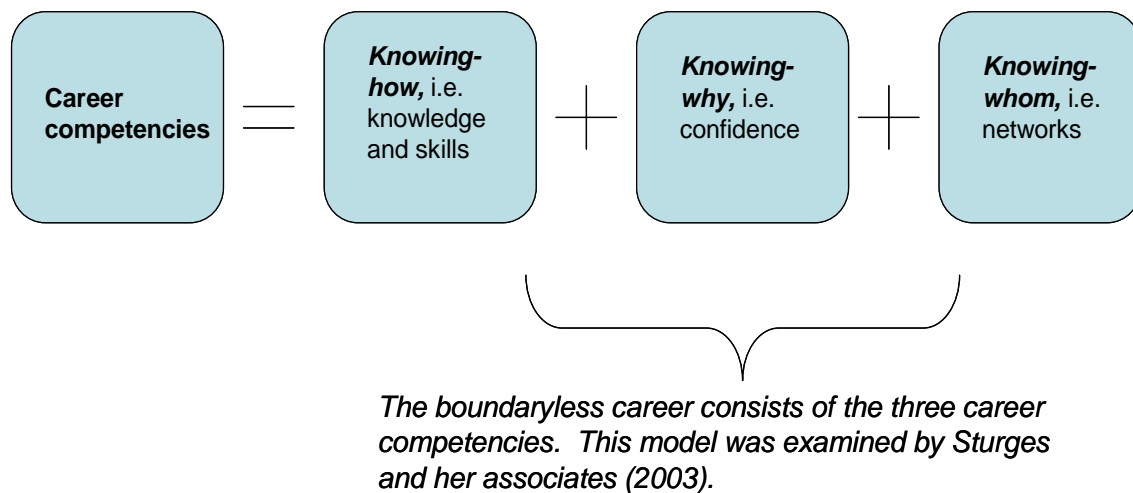
Early career theory presents the view that a continuous work history in the same organisation will help individuals to move to the top (Hall, 1987). Hall (1996) introduced the concept of 'protean' career, which means that an individual is in charge of his or her career orientation, not an organization. The characteristics of the 'protean' career are summarized by Sullivan (1999): flexible employment relationships, transferable skills across multiple firms, on-the-job action learning, personal identification with meaningful work, development of multiple networks and peer-learning relationships and individual responsibility for career management.

Contemporary career theory suggests that employees on 'protean' career paths will change employers to gain more skills and job opportunities. Changing employers may be a successful way to increase salary (Hall and Associates, 1996; Robinson and Miner, 1996). 'Protean' careers are likely to be good alternatives to the traditional career path whilst climbing corporate ladders. They may fit better with women's career needs for more flexibility and shifts over life stages (Peiperl and Arthur, 2000; Schneer and Reitman, 2006). In their views, Singh and Vinnicombe (2004) argue that

females are more likely to enter a women-friendly corporate environment if they perceive their career paths to be blocked in other organisations which do not invest in recruitment, training and development for female leaders. Women who have succeeded bring capital to the social networks by their senior positions since they have strong backgrounds and significant corporate experience.

DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) and Inkson and Arthur (2001) suggest that the boundaryless career consists of three career competencies (see figure 1): *knowing-how*, *knowing-why* and *knowing-whom*. ‘Knowing-how’ describes the knowledge and skills needed to perform a job, as well as the industry, management and other experience acquired in this process (Jones and Lichtenstein, 2000), and ‘knowing why’ indicates the growth in confidence in career progression (Jones and Lichenstein, 2000; Inkson and Arthur, 2001). ‘Knowing whom’ describes the individual’s network of family, friends, mentors, colleagues and professional associates (Rader and Burt, 1996; Jones and DeFillippi, 1996).

Figure 1: Career competencies’ model



Sources: DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) and Inkson and Arthur (2001)

1.4 Career capital

The term ‘career capital’ is mentioned in the new career literature. To some extent, it is not clear what it really means by ‘capital’. The word ‘capital’ is defined in a dictionary as:

Capital

‘Assets, cash, finance, funds, investments, means, money, principal, property, resources, stock or wealth’

(Oxford English Dictionary, 2000)

The use of the ‘capital’ varies in the academic research: in many of the studies the concept refers to claims about real, stored quantities of money, language, cultural knowledge and credentials, while in other studies it refers to more abstract qualities. For example, Baruch, Bell and Gray (2005) have examined MBA graduates’ inner-value capital which refers to the managerial competencies gained through a high sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence.

The existing research on MBA graduates’ career outcomes focuses largely on examining human capital (*knowing-how* and *knowing-why* competencies) and social capital (*knowing-whom* competencies). This research adopts the perspective of career capital, consisting of the three concepts of human, social and cultural capital. Human capital is defined as educational attainment, consisting of knowledge, skills and confidence which women need to perform a good managerial job. Social capital is captured by networks (networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends) in women’s career development. Cultural capital is developed through the value which society places on symbols of prestige (Tajfel, 1981); it refers to the improved career status, leading to increased career opportunities, salary increases, management promotions and personal reputation.

1.5 MBA programme and its changing context

The MBA designation originated in the United States, emerging from the late 19th century as the country became industrialized and companies sought out scientific approaches to management. The MBA degree has since achieved worldwide recognition (Bickerstaffe, 2008; Top MBA, 2008). In the US, there were 21,000 MBA graduates in 1970. According to AACSB (2008), there were 46,000 American MBA graduates from 1,460 business schools in 2007. Business Week (2008) listed

the top 61 business schools which offer MBA programmes in the US. Both MBA graduates and employers regard the Master Business Administration degree as a powerful ticket to success (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch and Leeming, 2001).

A similar picture has emerged in the United Kingdom (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Hay and Hodgkinson, 2006). Forrester (1986) reported that there were 27 British business and/or management schools in 1985, 20 of which offered an MBA programme, and which produced roughly 1,200 graduates. The 1980s were a period of major educational reform in the UK, a process that has been continuing, with new forms of qualifications and an increased emphasis on educational achievement. Business administration has been the most popular subject in further education of British female managers for the last two decades (Hammond and Holton, 1994). By April 2008, there were 111 providers of MBA programmes (British Council, 2008). In 2007, there were 3,430 graduates from full-time MBA programmes (AMBA, 2008) and the UK reported the highest average MBA salary in Europe (Top MBA, 2008). Table 1 shows the MBA graduates' salary report in the top five countries of Asia and Europe in 2007.

Table 1: MBA graduates' salary report in the top five countries of Europe and Asia 2007

European countries	Average salaries for MBA graduates (US\$)	Asian countries	Average salaries for MBA graduates (US\$)
United Kingdom	108,372	Singapore	84,983
France	97,692	Hong Kong	62,500
Germany	89,141	Taiwan	45,000
Netherlands	88,091	China	36,307
Spain	84,434	India	25,000

Source: QS TopMBA.com International Recruitment Survey and Salary Report 2007

The gender gap after the MBA remains significant, with male MBA graduates earning on average £12,200 more than female MBA graduates (AMBA, 2006). Gender discrimination is visible in the careers of female managers (Gerhart and Rynes, 1991; Coe, 1992; Leeming and Baruch, 1998). Companies are concerned about the leaky pipeline of female talent evidenced, in part, when women leave for family reasons. This is a particular loss when the women have invested in training and this experience cannot be channeled into senior management roles (Leeming and Baruch, 1998; Schneer and Reitman, 2006). Existing research on MBA graduates shows that men have gained more extrinsic benefits than women in terms of salary increases and job promotions whilst women have acquired more intrinsic benefits than men in terms of confidence (Simpson et al., 2004, 2005).

In the Far East, figures on the MBA programmes are rising sharply, led by four universities in Hong Kong (HK MBA Programs, 2008) and three universities in Singapore (Singapore MBA Programs, 2008) offering an MBA or similar programme. In 1966, the Chinese University of Hong Kong first introduced the MBA programme to graduate students. To date the school has developed a strong alumni base (Bickerstaffe, 2008; Top MBA, 2008), and female students on the Executive MBA programme accounted for 48 per cent in 2007 (The Financial Times, 2008). Over the past decade, average salaries for MBA graduates in Asia have risen an impressive 44 per cent, led by the graduates in Singapore (Top MBA, 2008). However, few business schools in Asia have research and teaching capabilities that provide the required depth of theoretical and practical education needed by working managers on the MBA programmes. To enhance the teaching quality in the Asian business schools, the focus is still on a growing need for faculty members which can teach various modules such as leadership (this will be discussed in chapter 7) and an improved MBA programme offering in-depth understanding of the theory and practice of conducting business (McLellan, 2007; Bickerstaffe, 2008).

In Taiwan, recruiting full-time adult students is not easy in the business schools. Working managers are not able or willing to be absent from work for a full-time MBA programme. Everyone feels strongly about keeping up to date with the best business practice and technology. Nonetheless, few working managers leave their employment to study for the MBA with a view to changing career directions or seeking career prospects. Few companies support their staff to enroll on a full-time course. Thus, there is an emerging demand for part-time Executive MBA programmes held in the evenings and at weekends.

Business studies are increasingly popular with students and the MBA degree is the most prestigious qualification for business and management. The cost of studying for an MBA is intimidating (Bickerstaffe, 2008). Female students tend to be cautious when it comes to taking financial risks (McLellan, 2007). Table 2 shows the profiles and fees of several leading Executive MBA programmes across the world in 2007. Students must be willing to take out personal loans to help them to finance MBA studies. They are banking on the long-term return on their investment. The decision on where to study is critical (AMBA, 2008; Newsweek, 2008). Reputation is one of the most important factors in choosing a good graduate business school (Bickerstaffe, 2008). Employers not only need to know whether employees have an MBA, but also where they studied. Some programmes have stronger reputations than others, which

change over time. Reputation means ‘quality’ of the MBA programme (AMBA, 2008), and is measured by graduates’ career progress (i.e. percentages of salary increases and work experience ranks), school diversity (i.e. proportions of female students and/or international faculty) and idea generation (i.e. Financial Times research ranks and proportions of faculty with doctoral degrees) (The Financial Times, 2008).

Table 2: Profiles of several executive MBA programmes 2007 across the world

Business school	Annual intake	Women students (%)	Average age	Programme fees	Average work experience (months)
Chinese University of Hong Kong	50	43	38	HK\$253,600 (US\$32,638)	168
London Business School	75	17	32	£42,500 (US\$77,273)	110
Lancaster	24	25	34	£17,000 (US\$30,909)	168
Northwestern (Kellogg)	235	17	38	US\$63,000	156
Oxford (Said)	34	15	35	£39,000 (US\$71,000)	156
Pennsylvania (Wharton)	206	0.2	34	US\$145,380	132

Source: *Which MBA? Making the right choice of executive education* by Bickerstaffe 2008

1.6 Research questions

There are many research studies on MBA education and men’s and women’s career outcomes as a result of completing the programme in the English-speaking world (see chapter three). Little is known about the career benefits which Taiwanese women have acquired from studying an Executive MBA programme. Cultural influences play an important role in the career development of working managers (Hofstede, 2001; Gannon, 2004). The existing literature on the career outcomes of the British MBA graduates focuses on the acquisition of knowledge, skills and confidence (Simpson et al., 2004). The aim of offering Executive MBA programmes is essentially career-enhancing rather than career-changing (Bickerstaffe, 2008).

The research gap identified in the literature described in chapter three prompts this cross-cultural study to consider the following research question:

How do British and Taiwanese women perceive the career benefits gained from taking the Executive MBA programme?

This involves in addition the following sub-questions:

- How do women perceive the acquisition of human capital?
- How do women perceive the acquisition of social capital?
- How do women perceive the acquisition of cultural capital?
- Are there differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese samples and, if so, are they attributable to culture and/or the characteristics of the individuals, namely, age differences, managerial experiences and family structures?

The actual method used to answer the above questions will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

This research has made contributions to theory. First, there was little evidence of the acquisition of social capital for MBA graduates as a result of completing an MBA in the 1990s. In the last few years there has been renewed interest in the importance of social capital to working managers. Nonetheless, the findings of empirical studies (Sturges et al., 2003; Simpson et al., 2005) have still focused on the acquisition of human capital (*knowing-how* and *knowing-why* competencies). This research shows the differences in career benefits in terms of the acquisition of social capital (*knowing-whom* competencies) between the British and Taiwanese samples. Secondly, the research adds to the growing literature on women's career stages in the development of their managerial careers. Thirdly, the cross-cultural differences on women in management are explored. The cultural system such as *Guanxi* and Confucianism has an impact on Taiwanese women's career benefits. Lastly, the research adds to the literature on why female managers choose to take an Executive MBA programme and what career benefits are gained. In particular, the concept of social capital was examined and proved to be critical to female managers at their mid-career stage. The research has attempted to add to the knowledge about career capital by redefining the concepts of human, social and cultural capital and reorganizing the dimensions within each concept.

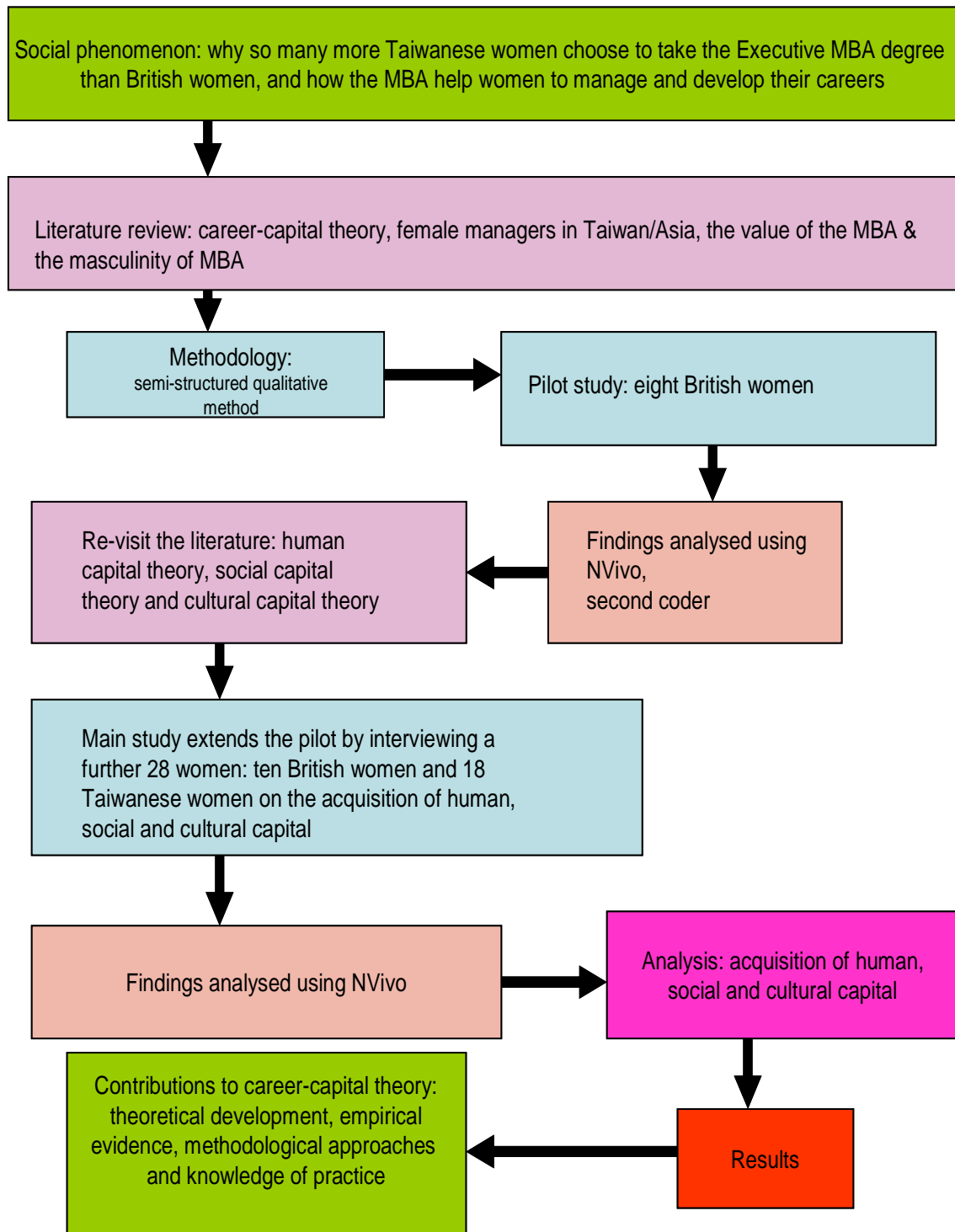
1.7 The PhD process

Given that MBA enrolment figures for women in Taiwan are currently higher than in the UK, preliminary research questions are:

- How do women perceive their experiences of taking the Executive MBA programme?
- Why do so many Taiwanese women choose to take the programme and how does the Executive MBA programme help them to manage and develop their careers?

Figure 2 shows the process of this doctoral research. The pilot study selected eight British women. The findings led to a decision to focus on the concepts of human, social and cultural capital. A re-examination of the literature in relation to the three concepts of career capital was conducted. The main study was an extension of the pilot. It used the same interview questions as the pilot about career history, motivation for taking the degree, career benefits, the use of MBA qualification and possible career paths. The responses were analyzed by using NVivo software (version 7.0), and led to a deeper focus on the acquisition of human, social and cultural capital. The results of the main study are reported, and the contributions to theory and practice are highlighted.

Figure 2: The PhD process



1.8 Summary of thesis chapters

This thesis consists of eight chapters, with chapters 5-7 presenting the empirical results.

Chapter 1 introduces the research issue, with a postscript reporting the researcher's personal journey through the process of this doctoral research. The research involves two areas of study, career capital and female managers and their MBA outcomes, which together with the cross-cultural study between Taiwan and the UK, has led to a larger than usual literature review. Thus two chapters are dedicated to the literature review.

Chapter 2 describes the context of this research, starting with an introduction to Taiwan in terms of its economy and political relationship with China, following with the factors of economic development and then citing literature on women's management position in Asia and Taiwan. The concepts of *Guanxi* (social networks) and Confucianism are discussed.

Chapter 3 presents existing literature on graduates' career outcomes from studying an MBA. It begins with the literature on women and career success and by discussing women and their different career stages. The conceptual model of career capital is presented by illustrating the work which has been done. The second part of this chapter starts with women's experiences of the MBA, and goes on to review the research conducted in the UK and US focusing on the career benefits of taking the programme, as well as previous work on the masculinity of the MBA in the UK and Australia.

The argument for the research question follows. A research gap is found in that existing research has yet to examine the career benefits which corporate women have acquired from completing the Executive MBA programme at different career stages.

Chapter 4 describes the methodology of this research. It begins with an argument for the philosophical perspective adopted (realist) in relation to the research questions. The choice of data collection (semi-structured qualitative interviews) is described. The research design is discussed through sampling strategies, research settings and participants, and then the research method is described. This research has two stages of field work: pilot and main study. In the section on field work, the pilot study and personal learning from conducting the pilot are discussed. The main study is introduced following the pilot.

NVivo software is used to analyze interview data. The list of tree nodes is developed on a basis of the theory of career capital and the results of recent empirical research. The method of analysing the data is described.

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the findings in the two-country study through the acquisition of career capital, in terms of discussing human, social and cultural capital. The participants from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School largely focus on reporting the acquisition of confidence, skills and improved career status leading to being better paid and promoted. The participants from London Business School concentrate on the career benefits resulting from learning new managerial skills and creating networks with alumni, peers and faculty leading to acquiring better paid jobs. The participants from National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University report the enjoyment and career benefits of establishing and maintaining networks. The participants from National Cheng Kung University have different perspectives on career benefits: older women have benefited from networking with peers, faculty, friends and alumni and younger women have enjoyed learning knowledge and skills from taking the Executive MBA programme.

Chapter 6 examines the acquisition of social capital, looking at women's perceptions of their motivation for building networks, sustaining networks and outcomes of developing networks in mid-career development. Female graduates from London Business School report career benefits similar to those from National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University and the two oldest women of National Cheng Kung University. It is evident that participants' age (early and mid-career stages), managerial experience (junior, middle and senior managers) and cultural background (British and Taiwanese) influence women's motivation for studying an Executive MBA. These factors have an impact on their career benefits following the completion of the programme.

In particular, the cultural system of *Guanxi* and Confucianism influence Taiwanese women's career development and their career benefits. Individualism (personal interest and value) in taking the Executive MBA has an impact on British women's career benefits.

Chapter 7 reviews what the participants report on the acquisition of human and cultural capital. From the participants' perceptions of the career benefits presented in chapter 5, this chapter reports their perspectives on human and cultural capital in the career development of female managers. Female graduates from Cranfield School of

Management and Cass Business School reveal career benefits similar to those younger women from National Cheng Kung University, in terms of acquiring knowledge, skills, confidence and career status. It is apparent that marriage, parenthood and availability of accessible domestic help (having a housekeeper and an extended family) play a key role in how women experience the different career stages in the two countries.

Chapter 8 reports the summary of the findings and the conclusions relating to the original research questions as well as the underlying theoretical perspectives.

The theoretical contribution is discussed. The research has attempted to add to the knowledge about career capital by redefining the concepts of human, social and cultural capital and reorganizing the dimensions within each concept. It has also attempted to fill a gap in the research on women's career benefits and how they relate to career stages (early and mid-career) and cultural backgrounds (British and Taiwanese). In particular, the findings show the differences in career benefits in terms of the acquisition of social capital between the British and Taiwanese samples. The findings add knowledge to existing literature relating to female Executive MBA graduates and their career benefits. It deepens an understanding of why female managers choose to study an Executive MBA programme in the UK and Taiwan and which career benefits are gained. It is important to note that variables such as age, managerial experience, family structure and cultural background help in explaining the differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese women. The research also adds to the knowledge about career stages in women's career development, and about how women leverage an Executive MBA degree to develop their careers. It has shaped an understanding of how British and Taiwanese women develop careers in their thirties and forties and what career benefits they have gained at different career stages.

This chapter also discusses what the challenges of conducting cross-cultural research are and how the researcher's personal bias has been managed, and acknowledges the limitations of this research. Further research is needed to extend the study of what career benefits MBA graduates from different countries acquire from taking the programme in order to understand the needs of all students who enroll on global programmes in the UK.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ON FEMALE MANAGERS IN TAIWAN

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ON FEMALE MANAGERS IN TAIWAN

This research was prompted by the trend that a significantly higher percentage of the MBA graduates were female in Taiwan than in the UK or the US. Empirical research in the UK has examined the career benefits which both men and women have acquired from completing an MBA. MBA programmes attract increasingly significant numbers of female managers in Taiwan and, more broadly, Asia. Surprisingly, no research on Taiwanese MBA graduates and their career benefits has been conducted. In order to gain an understanding of why so many female managers choose to study for an MBA, there is a need to examine the context of female managers' lives in Taiwan.

2.1 Introduction to Taiwan

The island of Taiwan, a total area of about 36,179 square kilometers, is located in the Western Pacific between Japan and the Philippines off the southeast coast of China, from which it is separated by the Taiwan Strait. The population in Taiwan was 22.86 millions in 2007 (Demographics of Taiwan, 2008). Almost 70 per cent of population is concentrated in metropolitan areas. Mandarin is the official language used for communication.

Taiwan is known as the Republic of China (ROC), and is Asia's first constitutional republic, founded in Guangzhou in 1912. The government, led by the Kuomintang (KMT), moved to Taiwan in 1949 when the Chinese Communist Party established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait have since been governed as separate territories.

2.1.1 Taiwan's economic growth

Taiwan has gradually built its high-tech industry over the past two decades, becoming the fourth largest nation in the world for information hardware and semi-conductor industries. Innovative and high-quality products are sold worldwide. To date, the government has been promoting a knowledge-based economy and industrial modernization to transform Taiwan into a "green silicon island" of high value-added production (The Economy, 2008).

According to the report by Ministry of Economic Affairs (2007), industrial production accounted for 31.05 per cent of Taiwan's GDP in 2002. Goods that once dominated Taiwan exports, such as products from the food processing, textile and garment

industries, as well as agricultural products such as wood, bamboo and leather, have all declined over the years. These labour-intensive industries have been replaced by capital- and technology-intensive industries, such as chemicals, petrochemicals, information technology, electrical equipment and electronics. In recent years, the government has been promoting many emerging industries, such as computer hardware and software, telecommunications, precision machinery, aerospace, energy, environmental, advanced materials and chemicals, life sciences and biochemical industries. Manufacturing has dominated Taiwan's industrial sector since the mid-1960s. Manufacturing output constituted over 80 per cent of total industrial production, employed over one-fourth of the nation's workforce and accounted for 25.85 per cent of the GDP in 2002 (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2007). Information technology and electronics continue to outperform all other manufacturing sectors (The Economy, 2008).

Taiwan has experienced and is still experiencing rapid economic growth which has, in turn, led to a dramatic increase in the demand for managers. This, coupled with rising educational levels among career women (Tang, 1992; Cheng and Liao, 1994; Chou, Fosh and Foster, 2005; Rowley and Yukongdi, 2009) and the changes in social acceptance of gender equality (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005), has led to an increase in female managers (Chou, Chen, Fosh and Foster, 2009). Since the 1970s, the economic development has been mainly related to three factors: export-oriented governmental policies (Cheng and Liao, 1994), American's support to Taiwan and the Confucian ethic of hard work and achievement (Kahn, 1979; Chen, Ko and Lawler, 2003), which has resulted in an annual per capita increase from less than US\$100 in 1950 to US\$16,494 in 2006 (Ministry of Economic Affairs, 2008). Taiwan has become a major investor in China (The Asian Business Site, 2000).

2.1.2 Taiwan-China Relationship

Malakunas (2008) is a foreign correspondent based in Beijing. He reports that potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait has remained a threat to the stability of the Asia-Pacific region and world peace for decades. The Chinese government still refuses to renounce the use of force against Taiwan as trade, business and private contacts between China and Taiwan are expanding. Both sides of the Taiwan Strait have experienced internal and external challenges: Taiwan has implemented thoroughgoing democratization leading to an unprecedented change of its governing party whilst China is undergoing economic and political transition. Cross-strait interactions have increased following the accession of both sides to the World Trade

Organisation and the strategic reshaping of the Asia-Pacific region in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks in the United States. The two rivals need to develop new perspectives and learn to coexist and co-prosper under an international framework.

In 1949 the two sides split at the end of a civil war. China still claims Taiwan as part of its territory awaiting reunification. It has threatened to invade if Taiwan declares independence. Taiwan's attempts to join international organisations as a single member have been blocked since China insists the island falls under its domain. In 2006 Taiwan and China began their first formal talks, focusing on establishing direct flights between the two sides and allowing Chinese tourists to travel freely to Taiwan which have been suspended for more than a decade. It is a good sign of a dramatic change in tensions between the rivals (Malakunas, 2008).

2.1.3 The increase in female managers

Early research shows that the expansion of service sectors has created a demand for female managers (Cheng and Liao, 1994), but women still have to balance work and family demands (Taiwan Women Web, 1998; Wu et al., 2000; Chou et al., 2005). Higher education is rewarded with better management positions for working women (Tang, 1992). In Taiwan, with its long tradition of stressing the importance of education, the majority of students who choose to study business and social sciences are women (Cheng and Liao, 1994). Foreign-language fluency is an important skill which enables female managers to begin their careers working in international companies. Thus, local companies have responded by recruiting and hiring women with foreign-language skills as managers in order to maintain their competitive advantage in the market (Adler, 1993; Cheng and Liao, 1994).

Applicants who choose to take an MBA degree aim to gain much more than a prestigious business qualification (McLellan, 2007). Building an alumni network is identified by both male and female graduates as a critical reason to take the programme, beyond the improvement of career prospects and the acquisition of new skills (Bickerstaffe, 2008; Newsweek, 2008). Surprisingly, there has been no empirical research on female MBA graduates and their career outcomes in Taiwan. No research has been conducted to uncover why so many Taiwanese female managers are prepared to invest in MBA programmes, and how the MBA degree helps in developing their corporate careers.

Taiwanese business schools offer predominantly part-time Executive MBA courses. Little research on women and MBA education has included Executive MBA graduates.

The Executive MBA programme is an interesting offering in the MBA scene since the people studying on the Executive MBA courses are generally full-time professional managers with considerable experience and employers are closely involved (Bickerstaffe, 2005). Thus, it is possible that the graduates may define the career benefits of taking the Executive MBA programme differently from their counterparts on full-time MBA programme. Taiwanese female managers embark on the course in their late thirties and early forties, much later than many British and American women, so the focus of this research is on Taiwanese women's mid-career in both the public and private sectors.

2.1.4 Guanxi

The concept of *Guanxi* (networks) in Asian business (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and Korea) is known worldwide (Yeung and Tung, 1996; Chen, Friedman, Yu and Sun, 2008). It refers to personal connections; it also links the family sphere to the business sphere. Having a personal network of acquaintances is extremely important in the Chinese society of Taiwan (Cheng and Liao, 1994). This is a consequence of collectivism (relationships before task), but it also contributes to a long-term orientation (Hofstede, 2001). One's capital of *Guanxi* lasts a lifetime, and one will not destroy it for short-term and bottom-line reasons (Yeung and Tung, 1996). Langenberg (2007) spent five years researching *Guanxi* in China and agreed with Yeung and Tung's findings on *Guanxi* and Confucianism. He argues that interpersonal relationships are said to have been one of the major dynamics of Chinese societies over the past 2,000 years. Assuming that the historical roots of *Guanxi* constitute a pervasive part of contemporary Chinese business conduct, it is commonplace to draw analogies between the situation two millennia ago and the present-day context.

2.1.5 Confucianism

The success of economic development in some Asian countries has been attributed to Confucianism (Adler, 1993; Yeung and Tung, 1996). The dominant culture of Taiwan is rooted in Confucianism which stresses deference to authority and social harmony (Chen, Ko and Lawler, 2003; Gannon, 2004). Confucian principles have been an important part of the curriculum in primary and secondary education. Interestingly, the Confucian adage says that it is a virtue if a woman has no ability (Xi, 1985). Men have more rights than women (Bu and Roy, 2008); women are shy, unassertive, and obedient to men (Adler, 1993).

The Chinese concept of *Lun* (moral codes in strong relationships) is the behavioural and moral standard for expressive ties, which creates intimate relations with those such as family members, brotherhood and relatives (Luo and Chang, 2008). Confucianism advocates *Wu Lun* which classifies four sets of superior-subordinate relationships, namely father-son, ruler-subject, husband-wife, elder-younger brother and an equal relationship between friends. Each relationship is governed by a particular norm: closeness between father and son, justice between ruler and subject, the separation of (gender-specific) spheres between husband and wife, proper order between older ruler and younger brother and trust between friends. Yeung and Tung's arguments on characteristics of Confucian and Western societies are summarized in table three. One basic principal of Confucianism stresses the importance of an individual's place in the hierarchy of social relationships (collectivism) in which individuals are part of a system of interdependent relationships, not isolated entities (Yeung and Tung, 1996). An individual's fulfillment of the responsibilities of a given role ensures the smooth functioning of society. In contrast, emphasizing individual norms and values is prevalent in the Western societies (Hofstede, 2001; Omar and Davidson, 2001; Gannon, 2004).

Aiming to examine the cross-cultural value of individualism-collectivism relating to the selection of career goals and tactics, Lin (2008) conducted quantitative research on 356 managers in the US, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. The sample consisted of 65 American managers, 89 Japanese managers, 71 Chinese managers from Hong Kong, 29 Chinese managers from Singapore and 102 Chinese managers from Taiwan. Collectivists tended to value contribution to society, humility, conformity, security, family and preserving public image. Individualists held the values of personal achievement, ambition, competition, freedom, individualistic benefits and life enjoyment. Career goals were defined as the objectives that an individual expected to achieve in working life. Career tactics were described as the strategies or methods which an individual chose to increase the possibility of achieving career goals.

The findings showed that Asian managers did not value collectivistic career goals and tactics more highly than did Americans. The likely explanation is that the concept of "team" has been widely advocated in the United States. American managers are expected to express collaborative behaviour in the workplace so that collectivistic career goals are seen as important and these Americans have adopted collectivistic career tactics to achieve their goals. No gender differences were found in terms of valuing individualistic and collectivistic career goals. Male and female managers did not choose different career tactics to achieve their career goals. However, younger

managers chose more individualistic career goals and tactics than older managers in Taiwan and Japan. One explanation is that rapid economic development and extensive interaction with Western cultures has engendered significant cultural change in Taiwan (Chen et al., 2003). It is similar to the Japanese society in which they have high industrialization and wide exposure to the Western cultures. No differences were found between younger and older managers in Hong Kong and Singapore in terms of choosing individualistic career goals. Since Hong Kong and Singapore were colonies of the British Empire, people have been exposed to individualism for a long time.

Although the American society has been characterized by strong individualism (Hofstede, 2001; Gannon, 2004), the results of this recent research on managers in five countries indicate that the value of collectivism is gradually recognized by American managers. Young generations in the Asian societies (e.g. Japan and Taiwan) start valuing and adopting individualism in their working life due to the influence of Western culture and value.

Table 3: Comparisons between Confucian and Western societies

	Confucian societies	Western countries (Judeo-Christianity)
The motives for engaging in social relations	The importance of an individual's place in the hierarchy of social relationship is stressed: individuals are part of a system of interdependent relationships, not isolated entities	The primary influence on human behaviour is self-interest.
Reciprocation in social relations	Confucianism encourages each individual to become a righteous person. The principle is that a person must repay favours and increase the value of the favour given.	There is unequal reciprocity in social transactions. The tilt of disadvantage is directed at the other party, not the self.
Time orientation	Members of Confucian societies assume the interdependence of events, and understand all social interactions within the context of a long-term balance sheet	Social transactions are seen as isolated occurrences. The objective is to maintain balance in each transaction, with great emphasis placed on immediate gains from the interaction
Pattern of differentiation	People in positions of power and authority must assist the disadvantaged. In return, the former gain face and a good reputation.	While social conscience may be strong, the powerful are under no obligation to assist those who are disadvantaged.
Nature of power	Governance by ethics is preferred over governance by law. Disregarding institutional law, those who occupy positions of authority have power of influence.	Western countries rely primarily on institutional law to ensure smooth and orderly progress.
Sanction practice	Face implies more than reputation. A loss of face brings shame not only to individuals, but also to family members. Due to this shame, the family members are unable to function in society.	Individuals feel guilty if their behaviour deviates from the cultural standards of morality because of an internalised understanding of sin.

Source: *Achieving business success in Confucian societies: the importance of Guanxi* by Yeung and Tung 1996

2.2 An overview of Asian women in management

The Asian economies have undertaken a significant transformation over the past five decades as they developed from being primarily agrarian societies to modern industrial countries (Benson and Yukongdi, 2005; Rowley and Yukongdi, 2009). Traditional

cultural and religious explanations are no longer critical for predicting women's representation in management in the 21st century. The impact of rapid economic growth and changes in underlying social structures has prompted the increasing number of female managers and executives (Adler, 1993; Omar and Davidson, 2001; Venter, 2002). This section aims to present the recent research on Asian women in management.

2.2.1 Female managers in some Asian countries

Working women face a number of career barriers in some Asian countries. Burke (2001) examined the relationship of work experience and women's career satisfaction and their psychological well being in five countries (Bulgaria, Canada, Norway, Singapore and the Philippines). The sample was taken from managerial and professional women in these countries over a five-year period. The majority of the research participants in each country were university graduates, married and had been working full-time without career interruptions since completing their schooling. His research revealed that few women in Singapore and the Philippines achieved executive leadership positions in large, private organisations. Women encountered obstacles (i.e. prejudice and a less supportive and accepting workplace) in their efforts to advance in managerial and professional careers and identified four critical issues in the workplace: the need for respect, recognition and support training and developmental opportunities.

Looking at women's participation in management, Yuasa (2005) indicated that female managers were seldom seen in Japan. Female legislators, senior officials and managers accounted for nine per cent of the total. There was a significant gender wage gap – female workers earned 66.50 per cent of male worker earnings in 2002. Yuasa identified five reasons for the persistent inequality of female managers: the internal labour market where work became segmented, the rules of promotion which provided little chance of career advancement for females, the average short length of service among women, the heavy burden of domestic responsibility for females, as well as task allocations and male-dominated cultures in the Japanese work organisations. As a result, women “chose” not to be promoted or to leave their jobs in early career due to their “attitude” to marriage, parenthood and family responsibility.

Kang and Rowley (2005) discussed South Korean women's role in management. Women constituted nearly half of the labour force, but a low proportion of female managers were found. Women gained considerably equality in access to education;

but whereas men went into the natural sciences and engineering, many women chose to study the humanities and arts. However, management positions were generally accessed through technical skills and training. Women were unlikely to further develop their human capital due to the traditional views on women's roles as wives and mothers. This had led to work interruptions in women's career similar to those of Japanese women in the labour market. Men were assigned to core jobs and departments and women were offered less challenging work and fewer mainstream jobs. This provided the basis for gender differences in promotion, rewards and decision-making authority.

Moreover, a number of organizational practices prevented women from entering management. Sex discrimination, where companies made decisions on employment and promotion based upon data such as absenteeism data for all women, not upon the actual experiences of individuals was commonplace. Male workers were willing to accept women as colleagues, but they were not happy to accept women as supervisors. Lack of professional networks and formal mentoring schemes were also found to impede women's representation in management in Korea.

Examining the factors contributing to and inhibiting the increase of female managers in Singapore, Lee (2005) selected 124 men and 54 women through three local newspapers: *The Straits Times*, *The Sunday Times* and *The Business Times*. The findings revealed that female managers' career success was widely recognized in Singapore. However, women continued to face challenges in career development since society stressed a woman's role in the family, and sex stereotypes were still prevalent. To be an effective manager female managers had to possess both "masculine" traits and "feminine" traits to meet the social expectation of motherhood. Women who wished to progress in their work organisations might upset the traditional balance of power which was often favorable to men.

Ebrahimi (1999) argued that Chinese women were perceived as passive, submissive, lacking aggression and a drive to be successful managers. His research aimed to examine differences in managerial motivation between male and female students taking business studies in Hong Kong. Using a sample of 115 students studying a Bachelor of Business Administration programme and 41 students enrolled in an MBA programme in a Hong Kong university, the results showed that no gender differences were found in terms of managerial motivation. Female students were not perceived as lacking managerial motivation or the assertiveness and competitiveness required to be good managers. They were capable of being as effective as male students.

The percentage of female managers is steadily increasing in Hong Kong, but women still face challenges in their career development. Ng and Chakrabarty (2005) conducted a qualitative research study, examining how female managers perceived gender stereotypes, work-family conflict, negative attitudes toward women as managers, tokenism, the “old-boy” network and sexual harassment, as well as how women managed these barriers to becoming senior executives. The findings supported Venter’s research (2002) on female managers that a woman’s role was seen as more important in the family than in the workplace leading to the conflict between home and work duties. Women’s coping strategies were to hire domestic help and to seek support from an extended family, which could provide both domestic and emotional support, helping women to maintain their careers in the labour market. This reflects the collective, social orientation of Chinese culture which was commented on by Omar and Davidson (2001). However, sex discrimination still exists in terms of negative attitudes towards women, the “old-boy” network and sexual harassment.

Summarizing the recent research on female managers in Asia, Benson and Yukongdi (2005) argue that women are seen to be under-represented in management and to face barriers in acquiring senior management roles. Organisational factors (acceptance of female managers, human capital and organizational practices) underpin many of these barriers, and a number of cultural attributes (gender roles and work-family conflicts) contribute to gender discrimination. Legislative changes are seen as one approach to improving Asian women’s careers as are increasing women’s educational levels, changing human resource practices, and raising an awareness of the inefficiencies and sub-optimal levels of organizational performance created by gender discrimination.

Yukongdi and Benson (2005) agree with other researchers about the career barriers which women have experienced resulting from the influence of culture and tradition in Asian economies. Nonetheless, rapid economic growth and new perspectives on women’s role and gender equality are seen as creating an opportunity for women’s representation in senior management (Omar and Davidson, 2001; Venter, 2002; Chou, Fosh and Foster, 2005; Yukongdi and Benson, 2005). The recent research reinforces that rising educational level, falling fertility rates and changing industrial structure have contributed to Asian women’s participation in the labour force. An increasing number of females have achieved career success and have acquired management positions in East and South East Asian countries (Rowley and Yukongdi, 2009).

2.2.2 Female managers in Taiwan

The traditional Chinese culture which strongly influences gender roles and relations emphasizes women's primary role and responsibilities as being in the family (Tang, 1992; Cheng and Liao, 1994; Chou, Fosh and Foster, 2005). This culture prevents many highly educated women with managerial potential from seeking their careers in senior management (Chuang and Lee, 2003) and encourages them to choose jobs that involve minimum interference with their family duties (Cheng and Liao, 1994). Furthermore, when women take senior roles in companies their work status spills over into family life and their husband's status at home is threatened (Alder, 1993; Cheng and Liao, 1994; Chuang and Lee, 2003). Housework is a problem for female managers in early career stage. They are able to hire a housekeeper to take care of their family and chores once they achieve a good managerial income (Cheng and Liao, 1994).

Cheng and Liao (1994) agreed with Tang (1992) that a university qualification was critical to gain a decent job. Taiwanese parents ascribed great importance to their children's education. Previously, the influence of Confucianism stressed the subordination of a woman to her father, husband and son (Yeung and Tung, 1996; Omar and Davidson, 2001) and the importance of sons' education meant that daughters were less likely to receive investment in their education. However, with rising educational levels, expansion of female educational opportunities and changes in social acceptance of gender equality (Yukongdi and Benson, 2005) parents' educational investment has increasingly included daughters (Cheng and Liao, 1994).

Universities, junior colleges and public senior schools, which are more prestigious than private ones, recruit students through a system of joint-examinations administered and supervised by the government. Female students are concentrated in the humanities and social sciences. However, female graduates have an advantage over their male counterparts, who are required to do two years' military service following college. When a male graduate is released from military service, his female classmates have already had two years' experience in the job market while some have already earned a master's degree (Cheng and Liao, 1994).

Cheng and Liao (1994) further reported that women's entry into management was brought about by the expansion of service sectors – government services, finance, trade, advertising and mass media – which recruited graduates from the humanities and social sciences where women predominated. New management positions have been

considered especially suitable for well-educated women. These new positions are in areas such as personnel (to handle women employees), advertising, as well as research and development. Over the past two decades the demand for professionals has increased considerably. Women have been attracted to occupations where gender bias has become less significant, such as law, IT, international trade and architecture. They have used their education to make considerable inroads into the professions (Tang, 1992; Cheng and Liao, 1994; Yukongdi and Benson, 2005).

Female managers still need to overcome obstacles in their career development. They have struggled to show that they perform a better job than male managers (Cheng and Liao, 1994). Working women are unable to get recognition from their managers (Lien, 2005) and are frustrated by their own performance as leaders (Siu et al., 1999). Female managers have attempted to make organizational changes, which are difficult to push forward (Cheng and Liao, 1994). Wang (1986) argues that a female manager does not have an easy time coping in a male manager's world. Although many women have good academic backgrounds, they lack role models. There has been increasing pressure on working women to continually improve their managerial performance while continuing to balance their roles in family and organisational life (Adler, 1993; Omar and Davidson, 2001; Chou, Fosh and Foster, 2005).

Tang (1992) conducted a survey, examining female managers' perceptions about a number of issues: qualification/credential (adaptability, technical skills and interpersonal skills), compensation and organizational environment (male colleagues, role of leadership style, sexual harassment, corporate policy and marriage). The sample was taken from 500 female managers working in the capital of Taipei; the response rate was 43 per cent. The findings revealed that women had to have the same credentials as men if they wished to acquire senior roles in management. Higher education was rewarded with a better management position. Female managers had fewer career opportunities than their male counterparts, a situation which was related to corporate policies and stereotyped images of women in terms marriage and parenthood. Married women who wished to combine work and family demands were seen not to be committed to their work organisations. They were the most likely to leave for family reasons. Career women who achieved success in corporate life still faced barriers coping with the multiple responsibilities of their roles as wives, mothers and working managers.

Examining occupational stress in managers in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Siu, Lu and Cooper (1999) conducted a questionnaire survey. The sample consisted of 280 male and female managers in Hong Kong and 347 male and female managers in Taiwan. In Hong Kong, female managers reported lower job satisfaction, and worse mental and physical well-being than male managers, while male managers reported fewer sources of stress and lower quitting intention than female managers. In Taiwan, no gender differences were found in terms of sources of stress, quitting intention, job satisfaction and mental and physical well-being. However, female managers revealed more work stress related to their managerial roles than male managers. Similar to the women in Western societies, Taiwanese women perceived barriers in their work organisations as being lack of female role models, non-supportive supervisors (usually men), long working hours in business world and struggles with balancing career and family duties. These barriers added stress to women's managerial roles at workplace.

Wu, Lin and Lee (2000) investigated personal characteristics, decision-making patterns and leadership styles of female managers in Taiwan, Japan and the United States. The sample was drawn from 160 Taiwanese women, 57 American females and 73 Japanese women. The findings showed that American female managers experienced the least problems relating to their gender and social roles. They saw themselves as independent and risk-taking women capable of making decisions effectively, and separating public interests from private issues. American women were likely to adopt leadership styles that concentrated on the working situation, teamwork and generating the respect of their subordinates. There was a low rate of harassment at workplace.

Japanese women encountered the most problems due to their gender and social roles in a male-dominated world. They made decisions and were willing to take risks only after consulting carefully with their colleagues. Harmonious relationships were stressed at the workplace, and women focused on keeping job satisfaction and teamwork spirits high.

Compared with their Japanese and American counterparts in the research, Taiwanese female managers perceived an average level of role problems and personality traits. They exhibited rapid decision-making patterns and were likely to take risks. With an equal emphasis on adopting both transformational and transactional leadership styles, harmonious interpersonal relationship was seen as important.

Chuang and Lee (2003) conducted a large survey on gender roles, work interruption and women's earnings in Taiwan. Of the 2401 women in the sample, 759 women had a continuous work history, 802 women were associated with an interrupted work history and 840 women had left the labour market. The findings showed that a husband's negative attitude towards a working wife influenced her decision to stay at home following childbirth. In order to increase the female participation in the labour market, it was important to educate men to give up their attitudes towards gender roles. Having an interrupted work history, well-educated (having a university degree) women suffered a reduction in their salary since their human capital was the key determinant of their earnings. No penalty (a reduction in salary) was experienced by less-educated (to secondary school level) women since their human capital had little to do with their earning power. In addition, as Taiwanese women made family responsibility their first priority it was hard for them to avoid career interruptions. The well-educated women understood that they would experience a lower salary when they reentered the labour market than they had received during their previous employment. This probably prevented many women from returning to the labour market when their children had grown up.

Examining the experiences of young college-educated Taiwanese women employed as clerical workers, Lien (2005) interviewed 19 women working in the service sectors. The female participants reported that they did not find their day-to-day work interesting. They were busy managing the workload, but they were not well-paid, having no career prospects. They felt that they were badly treated by their supervisors in terms of management recognition. Nonetheless, they indicated that they had career ambitions and aspirations, and were keen to accept meaningful jobs and take managerial roles in their career development.

Chou, Fosh and Foster (2005) conducted qualitative research on women's under-representation in management, interviewing ten female managers in Taiwan and four Taiwanese women at Cardiff Business School. The focus of their research was on women's ambitions, perceptions of promotional opportunities, experiences of juggling career with family demands and perspectives on cultural values in Taiwan. The findings showed that the representation of women in management positions was improving along with the growing female participation in the labour market, the rising education levels and the changing industrial structure. Women had various opportunities to take managerial roles at workplace, but this relied upon the industry in which they worked. Younger women in this study viewed their career prospects as improving. However, the cultural values of women's primary role in their family

(particularly in older women's points of view) and the struggles with balancing domestic and work commitments were found to be barriers for career women. Female managers perceived their roles and responsibilities as important being in the family. Women who were token female managers in an organisation were found to be isolated with little support or networks. This had led to the dampening of these women's career ambitions.

Investigating differences in perceptions of organisational cultures, Chen, Fosh and Foster (2008) conducted a questionnaire survey of male and female managers in three types of banks in Taiwan. The sample consisted of respondents from three former Taiwanese government banks, three new-wave ones and three European banks in Taiwan. The proposition was that female managers were less likely than their male counterparts in the same bank type to report their organisational culture as having shared values, being collective and supportive, having respect for senior staff and being emotional, autonomous and friendly to women. The findings revealed that the female managers from the European banks were less likely than males to perceive their organisational cultures as being collective and friendly to women but they were more likely than the males to report the cultures as supportive. There were no gender differences on other aspects. The female managers from the new-wave banks were less likely than males to report their work organisations as having shared values. They were less likely than the males to describe themselves as having respect for senior people, emotionalism and autonomy. There were no gender differences on other aspects. The female managers from the former government banks did not perceive the working environment as women-friendly but there were no gender differences on other aspects. To explain the differences in perceptions of organisational cultures, the type of each bank in terms of its ownership, history and type of business led to employees having specific experiences of organisational socialisation and to bank managements adopting specific human resource practices such as team-working and recruitment and selection and assessing data such as employees' age and educational background.

2.2.3 Research on Asian and North American women

In order to uncover what prevented the movement of women into senior management and what countries, companies and women themselves did to increase women's presentation in management, Adler and Izraeli (1994) conducted their research on the changing nature of world business and its impact on the role of female managers.

Choosing samples across Asia, Europe, Middle East/Africa and North America, the research reviewed the role of women working within their own countries as well as those working across national boundaries. Prior to publishing their book of *Competitive Frontiers: Women Managers in a Global Economy*, Adler (1993) summarized the perspectives of Asian female executives who sought positions which offered them challenge, opportunity for career growth and a friendly organizational environment, rather than salary level or a prestigious job description. The female executives in Asia sought positions which were intellectually challenging and they were generally found to make a long-term commitment to an organisation. These women anticipated both an appropriate level of managerial responsibility and “stretch” which meant the opportunity to learn from what they were doing. The Asian women also stressed that they would like to work for a company with an organisational climate which would offer them ongoing opportunities to learn and possibilities for career development.

Making a comparison between Asian and North American women in terms of the struggles with career and family duties, Alder (1993) went on to reveal that Asian women continued to seek different ways to balance their professional and personal lives, although they were highly committed to their careers. In Asia, seeking help from an employer to reduce the time demands of managing a household and caring for children was not seen as critical as it was in North America. Many Asian senior women had the assistance of live-in housemaids and an extended family. Unlike North American women, provision for maternity leave and childcare was not perceived as important to Asian female executives. Asian women took primary responsibilities for the household and children of the family. Junior and middle-level managers appreciated receiving help from employers with their family demands in terms of flextime, a company car and driver for personnel use. Most Asian women had access to many more social support systems than the majority of their North American counterparts. Unlike North Americans, when Asian women (and men) accepted a new job offer the owners or managers of the company were known to them, either directly or through a mutually respected acquaintance – illustrating a networked society.

2.3 Women's participation in labour market

Over the past few decades, changes in demographic, social and economic forces have resulted in a large increase in the number of women in paid employment across the world (International Labour Review, 1998; Omar and Davidson, 2001). Acquiring accurate statistics on female managers is not easy due to the variety of definitions used for the term 'manager' and the variety of data collection techniques (Powell, 1999; Vinnicombe, 2000).

The total labour force in Taiwan grew rapidly from 3.6 million in 1960 to 9.8 million in 2000 (Chen, Ko and Lawler, 2003). Early research showed that female managers in Taiwan concentrated in the service sectors and the proportion of women in management increased slowly and accounted for eight per cent in 1993 (Cheng and Liao, 1994). However, Chou, Fosh and Foster (2005) indicated that most Taiwanese female workers were employed in manufacturing and trade and the number of female managers has been increasing. The percentage of women in management, including legislators, government administrators, business executives and managers, was 16 per cent in 2005 (Chou, Chen, Fosh and Foster, 2009). The high proportion of female students (about 40 per cent) on the Taiwanese MBA programme shows that women seek business and management education in order to help them to advance managerial careers.

In the UK, women make up about 50 per cent of the workforce (European Commission, 2008) and it is higher than in other European countries despite low maternity benefits and little or no childcare support (Gannon, 2004). In 2005, the proportion of female managers in the UK accounted for 33 per cent in the labour force survey by European Commission. The percentage of female students on the British MBA programme stands about 25 per cent (Vinnicombe, 2000; AMBA, 2008) and is decreasing (Catalyst, 2000; The Economist, 2003; Alsop, 2006; Bradshaw, 2007). Hence it is useful to research the differences in career benefits which female graduates have gained from studying an MBA between the UK and Taiwan.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW ON WOMEN'S CAREER OUTCOMES FROM TAKING AN MBA

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW ON WOMEN'S CAREER OUTCOMES FROM TAKING AN MBA

While the last chapter presents the research on female managers in Taiwan, this chapter reviews the literature relating to women's career success and the career benefits which women accrue as a result of taking an MBA programme, recent developed theories of the different stages of women's careers and the perspective of career-capital. It begins with discussing existing research on women's personal definitions of career success. The research on women's different career stages is reviewed and existing literature on female MBA graduates' career outcomes is discussed. Additionally, the literature on the masculinity of the MBA is cited. This chapter ends by highlighting the research gap, followed by the research questions.

3.1 Definitions of women's career success

In order to understand the career benefits which women are seeking from MBA studies, it is vital to consider what has been known about how women view career success. Career is a concept, existing in the area between the individual (psychological) and the collective (sociological) levels of analysis (Bailyn, 1989; O'Neil, Bilimoria and Saatcioglu, 2004). Career success consists of a subjective, internal dimension as well as an objective, external perspective from which it is generally viewed (Gattiker and Larwood, 1986; Hall 2002). The lack of a conceptualization of career success from an individual's perspective is one of the weaknesses of career theory for women (Poole et al, 1993; Sturges, 1999). Scholars have argued that career success for women must be based upon both objective criteria such as salary and promotions (Cox and Harquail, 1991; Schneer and Reitman, 1994; Simpson, 1995) and subjective ones such as interest, work satisfaction, and confidence as well as social and emotional support (Gattiker and Larwood, 1990; Poole et al., 1993; Peluchette, 1993; Simpson 1998, 2000; Leeming and Baruch, 1998). Nonetheless, female managers' personal definitions of success have been historically excluded from research into careers (Herriot et al, 1994). For this reason, women's career success has been assumed to be the same as men's based upon external criteria such as managerial position and salary level which can be easily quantified (Melamed, 1995; Simpson, 1998, 2000). Sturges (1999) challenged this quantitative approach and examined women's own definitions of career success. This will be discussed in the following section.

3.1.1 Women's career success

How women define career success is likely to be influenced by both their socialization as women (Gilligan, 1982) and the constraints they perceive in their careers in corporate life where they remain in a minority and where hierarchical success is hard to achieve (Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Poole et al, 1993). Recent literature indicates that the importance of external criteria for career success seems to reduce as female managers' age. Women in their late thirties and forties are more concerned with criteria for success such as autonomy and influence (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005). Little empirical research on women's career success in the UK has been conducted, thus Sturges' study (1999) on the personal definition of women's career success is reviewed.

3.1.2 Personal definitions of career success

Sturges (1999) examined how 36 managers (equal numbers of men and women) personally defined career success through in-depth interviews in a leading British telecommunication company. She divided the sample into three age groups: the twenties, the thirties and the forties, representing a range of organisational divisions and managerial functions. The data analysis consisted of identifying themes of career success and creating a typology of four categories of managers: Climbers, Experts, Influencers and Self-realizers. The Climbers described career success primarily in terms of external criteria such as hierarchical position, number of promotions and financial rewards. The Experts viewed career success in terms of achieving a high level of competency at work and being recognized personally for being good at what they did, whether in terms of being seen to be an expert or winning the respect of peers with whom they worked. The Influencers defined career success as being able to perform a job that had a tangible and positive effect on the organization they worked for, regardless of the hierarchical position they occupied. The Self-realizers described career success as an internal concept, based on the idea of achievement at a personal level and work-life balance.

In Sturges' research, the group of Climbers consisted of seven men and no women. The group of Experts comprised seven women and two men. The group of Self-realizers included six women and one man. The group of Influencers comprised six men and five women. The findings showed that women perceived career success in terms of accomplishment and personal recognition in their early career. Working experience helped younger women to enhance confidence as their careers developed.

The female managers in their thirties and forties appeared less inclined to define career success in terms of hierarchical and financial progression. Sturges argued that women's age influenced their conceptions of career success.

Female managers struggle to break through the so-called 'glass ceiling' in their work organisations. Simpson and Altman (2000) agree with Sturges that age is a discerning factor in women's career development. In their research, women under 35 years old were less likely to have children than older women who were over 35 years old. They appeared to have more career opportunities than the older women. Therefore, it is important to incorporate the factor of age in this doctoral research on career benefits which women have acquired from studying for an MBA.

3.1.3 American research on career success

It is useful to review how American women define their career success. Kirchmeyer (1998) conducted a questionnaire survey on 292 mid-career managers, who gained an MBA degree in an American business school. In her sample, male and female managers had similar profiles in terms of work experience and educational backgrounds. She examined four categories of career success: human capital, individual determinants, interpersonal determinants and family determinants. Human capital determinants referred to personal investments that an individual made to enrich value in the workplace with education and work experience. Individual determinants included personality traits and other psychological factors that related to an individual's ability for being managers. Interpersonal determinants involved supportive relationships at work that facilitated performance, such as mentors and peer networks. Family determinants encompassed family status variables (married or single, having employed spouse or unemployed spouse) that could influence an individual's career.

The findings showed the importance of work experience and organizational tenure in men's and women's career development. Gender roles were found to have stronger effects on objective and subjective career success for women than for men. Supportive relationships including mentors and peers networks were found to have stronger effects on objective career success for men than for women, and to have the same effects on the subjective career success for men and women. Interestingly, the findings on the impact of family status on career success found no differential effects for male and female managers. This was contradictory to Kirchmeyer's later research results.

Aiming to examine the career progression between men and women during the 1990's, Kirchmeyer (2002) took her 1998's sample to conduct research. Male and female MBA graduates earned the same incomes at the time of MBA graduation, but men's incomes rose more than women's after nine years and the income gap widened further over the next four years. Women achieved the same rate of promotion as men, but the financial returns from promotions were greater for men than for women before the mid-1990s although this equalized after the mid-1990s. Female graduates' predictions about future progression were less optimistic than men's. The differences between men's and women's income were explained by gender differences in career determinants, such as working hours, career interruptions and having an unemployed spouse. Having children had been expected to lower progression for women rather than for men. Women's responsibility for childcare led to conflict among parenting, work roles and low work-related attitudes. Parenthood was seen as an obstacle to women's success in management.

Kirchmeyer concluded that well-educated, professional women have probably acquired the financial resources and personal coping strategies to manage family demands better than less well-educated women. In her longitudinal study of the same sample, she also stressed that family status, in terms of marital status and parenting, played a key role in women's career success.

Intriguingly, Kirchmeyer (2006) conducted quantitative research on a sample of American doctoral graduates examining three explanations for the effects of family on their objective career success: choice, performance and signaling explanation. Choice concerned how men's and women's career decisions affected later success. The performance explanation looked at how family roles and responsibilities had an impact on men's and women's abilities to perform at work. The signaling explanation held that family influenced the granting of promotions and financial rewards directly and independently from the career decisions and actual performance of an individual. The sample consisted of 71 men and 72 women who gained PhD and DBA degrees in accounting. The findings revealed that women achieved less career success than men in two respects. First, women were less productive and the publication gap widened over time. There were no significant gender differences at early career stage, but fewer publications and lower productivity for women compared to men were found over time. Second, women earned lower salaries from promotions than men at the mid-career stage. Family structures did have an impact on men's and women's choice and performance in career development. At the time of graduation and the early career stage, family structure (a working husband with children) inhibited women's

access to career opportunities by imposing geographic restrictions and by encouraging them to favor jobs offering a balance of work and family. However, family structures had little effect on men favoring work-family balance in jobs. In addition, men having non-employed partners achieved the success of high publication productivity, since wives took care of family matters and allowed professional men to invest resources of time, energy and commitment at work. In contrast, women having non-employed partners encountered the problem of low publication productivity. An unemployed husband meant a burden that drained women's resources away from research activities. In terms of achieving the rank of full professor, men's career advancement benefited directly from having non-employed partners due to conformance to social expectations about the supportive role of men in families. Women with non-employed partners violated social expectations based upon traditional family roles. Women were at a career disadvantage since they were less likely to have non-employed partners who were associated with achieving high ranks at their mid-career stage.

Examining women's career types and effects on their satisfaction with career success and attributions of the sources of career success, O'Neil, Bilimoria and Saatcioglu (2004) conducted quantitative research on a sample of American females. They proposed that combinations of the career pattern and career locus dimensions generated four different career types: creating, achieving, navigating and adapting. The creating career type was characterized by a belief in personal responsibility for directing and realizing an individual's own career success, and a career path that reflected responsiveness, fluid movement in and out of organizations, and accommodation of non-work related priorities. The achieving career type was described by a belief in personal responsibility for directing and realizing an individual's own career success, and a career path that reflected purposive career enhancement behaviors, and optional learning opportunities. The navigating career type was characterized by a belief that responsibility for career success rested mainly with others and/or fortune, and a career path that reflected purposive career enhancement behaviors, and optional learning opportunities. The adapting career type was described by a belief that responsibility for career success rested mainly with other and/or fortune, and a career path that reflected responsiveness, fluid movement in and out of organizations, and accommodation of non-work related priorities.

The sample of their research was drawn from 137 American women who were participants of MBA and Executive Education seminars at Case Western Reserve University in 2002. The participants completed a questionnaire at the end of the

seminars and class sessions. The findings indicated three distinct career types determined by combinations of emergent or ordered career patterns and internal or external career loci: achievers, navigators and accommodators. Navigators had predominantly ordered careers and an external career locus. Achievers had predominantly ordered careers and an internal career locus. Accommodators had predominantly emergent careers while their careers locus lied approximately midway between the internal and external poles. Accommodators were significantly lower than navigators and achievers on the contribution of human capital to career success and they were less satisfied with their career success than the other two career types of women.

3.2 Career stages

Career stages are the job sequences or career patterns that individuals pass through during the course of their working lives and parallel the psychological concept of life stages (Super, 1957; Lynn, Cao and Horn, 1996). They can be measured in various ways. The most common way is measuring an individual's age (Levinson, 1996). The research on female managers' career stages generally look at the importance of differences at women's early and mid-career life (Levinson, 1996; Sturges, 1999; O'Neil and Bilimoria 2005). No research on women's different career stages has been found in the UK and Taiwan.

3.2.1 Early research on women's life stages

Looking at a sample of 502 MBA graduates, Cox and Harquail (1991) examined links between the importance of gender, career paths and career success. The sample consisted of 125 female and 377 male respondents at their early career stage. The findings indicated that women in managerial careers did not differ from men on total promotions and career satisfaction but they experienced lower salary increases, fewer management promotions and lower hierarchical levels compared to men of similar education, age, experience, performance and career paths. Starting salaries, starting job levels, job mobility, line experience and company seniority were found to have an impact on graduates' career success.

Contradicting Cox and Harquail's results, Schneer and Reitman (1994) argued that there were no gender differences in terms of salary and status at the early career stage of male and female MBA graduates. Discrimination was prevalent for females at mid-career. They reported less pay, less job satisfaction and less management recognition (Schneer and Reitman, 1994). This study will be reviewed in section 3.4.1. Similar results showed in Levinson (1996)'s seminal research of the seasons of a woman's life.

Levinson (1996) indicated that women's life changed at the age of 30. All the working women went through major changes in job, income and occupational path during this period. They gained a new understanding of the work world. Career women went through a marked, painful process as they were aware of the competitive struggles, the "politics" of organizational life and the diverse obstacles to women's career advancement. The work world was neither as caring nor as rational as the young women had anticipated. The career progress within it depended upon much more than women's own ability and expertise. Women had to reappraise their occupational aspirations and the relative value they placed on work, family and other aspects of life. In women's mid-life transition (ages 40-45), career success influenced strongly an individual's income and self-esteem. The involvement in women's career had both internal and external elements. The diverse inner motives for seeking career advancement were to gain fame, fortune, power and achievement. The external pressures to perform at increasingly higher levels and to advance up the organisational hierarchy were job promotions and salary increases. Levinson concluded that women in mid-life disproportionately found themselves engaged in work that was not psychologically satisfying and might have been self-damaging. The mid-life transition was a period as a shifting from the egocentrism of youth to the balancing of self and others that would define an individual's later years.

3.2.2 Recent research on women's career stages

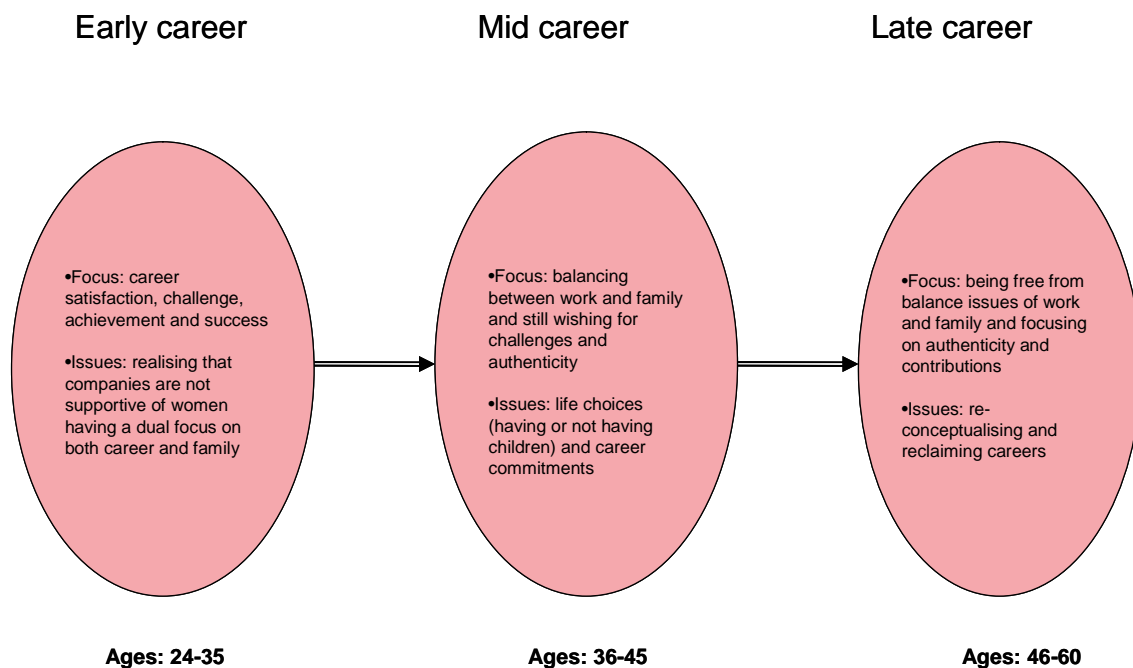
Choosing a sample of American women, Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) conducted their research on career women's various drivers at different career stages. They conceptualized career as a "kaleidoscope", having three stages: challenge (early career), balance (mid-career) and authenticity (late career). Women in the sample focused on discussing their needs for career challenges in early career. Issues of balance and authenticity were of secondary concern, but still evident in women's career development. In mid-career, women were predominantly concerned about the issue of balance. Balancing career and family demands was seen as a priority no matter whether they had partners or children or whether they were single. In late career, women showed their desire for authenticity. They were still interested in challenges, but they made career decisions in an authentic, meaningful way. The issue of balance faded into the background.

A similar study uncovering the nature of American women's career experiences over the life course was conducted. O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) examined participants' career patterns, career locus, career contexts and career beliefs. The sample consisted of 60 women ranging in age from 24 to 60. The findings showed the patterns of how women's

careers developed over time relating to the impact of career contexts and women's own changing images of their careers and career success. Women in the idealistic achievement phase (ages 24-35) based career choices on their desires for career satisfaction, achievement and success, as well as their desires to positively have an impact on others. They experienced positive career movements such as promotions. Women in the pragmatic endurance phase (ages 36-45) were pragmatic about their careers. They had to combine career and family demands. Their work environments were not supportive and satisfying. Having negative career experiences, women saw their futures as "staying put" in their jobs and organizations. Women in the re-inventive contribution phase (ages 46-60) focused on contributing to their organizations, families and communities. They were less likely to struggle with balancing work and family duties than those women in the other two phases. Returning to a more positive perspective in career experiences, women enjoyed an orderliness of work-related contexts.

Figure 3 shows the model of women's three career stages, combining recent research between O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2005). The existing research on the career outcomes of female MBA graduates in the UK has been reviewed and it was found that none has examined women's different career stages. This doctoral study aims to incorporate the findings from research on women's career stages as the ages of some women in the British sample are between 30 and 34 (early career) and some are between 35 and 40 years old (mid-career). All women in the Taiwanese sample are at the mid-career stage (ages 35-45) hence this may have an impact on the findings of the research.

Figure 3: Women's three career stages in life



Sources: Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) and O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005)

3.3 Career capital

Existing research indicates that female managers regard qualifications (such as an MBA) as a passport to successful managerial careers (Melamed, 1995; Simpson, 1998; Kirchmeyer, 1998, 2002). Women are more likely to see extra qualifications as a career asset than men. In the face of career barriers and continuing frustration of career goals, female managers respond by seeking more qualifications to enhance their marketability than men (Burke and McKeen, 1994). Networking is another career asset for women to seek support and achieve career objectives (Hammond and Holton, 1994; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Cohen and Prusak, 2001; Timberlake, 2005). Hence, the roles of qualifications (human capital) and the activities of networking (social capital) in career success will be an important part of the discussion on the career capital involved in women's career progress.

3.3.1 Human capital

Human capital theory was developed after World War II, although many of the assumptions and ideas in the theory were discussed in the eighteenth century. Prior to World War II, economists were concerned with the economic returns generated by

physical capital such as property, plant and equipment. The benefits of education and training were ascribed to politics and morals rather than economic returns. Although the role of education in leading to well paid jobs was acknowledged, very few scholars linked education and economic impact. The tragic events which unfolded during the World War II promoted economists to consider the economic loss of the trained soldiers, workers and citizens who lost their lives. The theory of human capital developed slowly over time, and experienced some push back as some economists found it problematic when ascribing economic value to education, which was based on personal, social or intellectual rather than economic or monetary motivations (Terjesen, 2005).

Early research on human capital theory proposes that people make rational choice regarding investment (time, effort and money) in their own human capital such as education, training and experience (Becker, 1975). It examines the role of an individual's competence, focusing on how the individual's knowledge enhances ability and can result in more effective performance than before (Melamed, 1995; McCall, 1998). Recent research looks at how the investment helps the individual to enhance cognitive and productive capabilities, and is valued by companies and rewarded with earnings and promotions (Becker, 1993). Human capital is portable and does not belong to the companies since employees who decide the amount of investment in it, are seen as owning it (Roos et al., 1997). Employers consider the costs and benefits of the investment. It is likely that the employers will help their employees on the investment in human capital in terms of sponsorships (Bickerstaffe, 2008). However, the investment in human capital has been found to increase earnings only for a short period of time (Becker, 1993). Age is one form of human capital, because younger employees are willing to invest more time and effort in developing their competency compared to older ones, and the return on investment is much higher (Pennings et al., 1998). The employers reward their employees who possess high level of human capital through job promotions (Becker, 1993; Davenport, 1999).

Sociologists have argued the importance of women's uninterrupted career (Anderson and Carter, 1984; Reitman and Schneer, 2005). Early career literature shows that a continuous work history in the same organization helps women to move to the top (Hall, 1987). Women who invest more in their human capital are likely to earn more than comparable women who do not invest. The relationship between investment in human capital and return on earnings is stronger at women's early and mid-career than their late career (Metz and Tharenou, 2001).

The value of human capital has been illustrated in a number of empirical studies on MBA graduates and their career outcomes. For example, gaining the MBA degree has been shown to be linked to salary increases and promotions (Simpson, 1995, 1998; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Schneer and Reitman, 2006). An individual's tenure in jobs and organisations develops deep experiences, firm-specific skills and knowledge development, which are linked to career success (Sturges, 1999).

Melamed (1995) indicated that education and qualifications enhanced women's credibility. Women tended to be judged by more strict criteria than men. As a result, the female high-flyers needed to have high levels of skills, qualifications and competence in order to achieve their career success. Interestingly, men's credibility was less dependent on human capital than women's. The criteria for men's success were less rigid than women's, and they could rely on other assets such as access to informal networks as a means of progression. On this basis, gaining the MBA qualification was more important for women than for men in career development. Other researchers supported the findings by Melamed that the MBA graduates perceived having an MBA as a 'passport' to senior managerial roles and a 'fast track' career (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Simpson, 1995, 1998, 2000). The MBA qualification helped graduates to achieve success, to acquire knowledge and skills and to enhance confidence (Carnall, 1992; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Sturges et al., 2003; Simpson et al., 2004). In this doctoral research, human capital is defined as educational attainment, consisting of knowledge, skills and confidence which female managers need in career development.

3.3.2 Social capital

There are various definitions of social capital in the existing research. Cohen and Prusak (2001) define it as "the norms and social relations embedded in social structures that enabled people to coordinate action and to achieve desired goals". It refers to the collective value of all social networks and the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation generated by those social networks. It creates collaboration, commitment, information sharing and trust while enhancing genuine participation in the organisation which leads to great success and effectiveness. Using social connections and social relations is essential in achieving goals for individuals (Metz and Tharenou, 2001; Timberlake, 2005).

Raider and Burt (1996) define social capital as: "[...] the structure of individual's contact networks – the pattern of interconnection among the various people with whom

each person is tied". Social capital exists in the relationships between and among people and extends the more that the position one occupies in the social network constitutes a valuable resource (Friedman and Krackhardt, 1997). From the social capital perspective, what is critical to success is not individual attributes but the central network position at which one is embedded in an organization – that is, one's position in a network of social relations determines the amount of one's social capital, which produces the differences in career outcomes (Brass, 1995). From the network perspective, the amount of social capital possessed is determined by whether individuals can occupy an advantageous network position where they get tied to others who possess desirable resources, such as information and financial support, in order to achieve positive work-related and career outcomes. Adler and Kwon (2002) have stressed that the network position is necessary for social capital since it represents opportunities to gain access to and interact with others.

Individuals draw value from trust, reciprocity, information and cooperation from social network. Social network structures enable access to resources which benefit career success, in terms of salary, promotions and career satisfaction, and are mediated by access to information and resources and career sponsorship (Jones and DeFillippi, 1996; Dickmann and Doherty, 2008). Social capital necessitates an ongoing effort to preserve social relationships (Burt, 1992). Social network can be of a prescribed (formal, based on formally specified relationship) or of an emergent (informal) nature, for example based on discretionary interaction (Ibarra, 1993). It assists women to overcome the obstacles and social isolation encountered at high managerial levels and to provide opportunities for relational learning (Metz and Tharenou, 2001). In their research on Australian women's career advancement examining the factors of human and social capital, Metz and Tharenou (2001) argued that social capital was more important to women's career advancement to high managerial levels than to low managerial levels because gender discrimination was seen as the most critical barrier to their advancement at senior managerial levels.

Hughes (2003) indicated that networking was not only a one-time strategy employed primarily when searching for a new job, but also a way of developing and maintaining a base of contacts which could offer valuable career benefits to women. Networking was a useful way to build professional knowledge, discover creative solutions to problems and generate new businesses. Networking helped men and women to reach short-term goals and make a difference in achieving long-term personal objectives. Reinforcing the findings by Metz and Tharenou (2001) and Hughes (2003), Timberlake (2005) stressed that women were hindered in their efforts to achieve career

advancement and its associated benefits. This related to women's inability to access social capital, which included an organisational commodity and source of the knowledge, resources and networks that were essential for women's career development and maturation.

To summarize, social capital theory is concerned with an individual's position in a social network of relationships and the resources embedded in, available through, or derived from these networks. Management researchers on MBA education argue that studying for an MBA in a reputable business school served as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of a valuable network (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch et al., 2005). In this research, social capital is defined as networks which female managers gain, maintain and develop with their peers, friends, alumni and faculty in career development.

3.3.3 The importance of human capital versus social capital

Human capital and social capital are interrelated (Coleman, 1988). The relationship between human capital and social capital is critical. The information and knowledge individuals possess will be positively related to the positions they occupy in social networks, and will develop social capital because of influence on other members (Leenders and Gabbay, 1999).

Research on the progress of women in management around the world has shown that women remain underrepresented at the higher levels despite their increased investment in human capital (Adler & Izraeli, 1994; International Labour office, 1997). Women's human capital (credentials of education) give them access to the lower levels of management but their lack of social networks prevents them from advancing to the higher levels. Women's entry into the lower management levels has been accompanied by a decreasing supply of qualified men for those positions. Women gain access to management at the entry level when they become well-educated and as equal opportunity legislation is introduced in various countries (Alder, 1993; Metz & Tharenou, 2001).

Women experienced failure to gain access to executive positions partly because there continued to be a supply of men for these scarce and well remunerated positions (Adler & Izraeli, 1994). At the higher managerial level, social networks were important in allowing members of the group (men) access-and in preventing non-members (women) access-to information and advancement opportunities. Social capital has been used to explain differences in achievement between individuals with similar human capital

(Portes, 1998). Human capital was important for women to gain entry to low management levels (supervisory and junior) and social capital to advance to high managerial levels (middle and senior management) (Metz & Tharenou, 2001)

Metz and Tharenou (2001) went on to reveal that individuals were valued for their organisational specific knowledge and skills. At managerial levels, individuals were also valued for their broad functional knowledge, skills and their ability to cope with changing work conditions. In addition, individuals who were not part of the permanent organisational core were anticipated to focus on continuous learning to remain employable across organisations. Human capital was a measure of lifelong learning, and investment in human capital (such as education, on-the-job training, and type of occupation) was positively related to earnings and wealth. Women's earnings might increase only for a limited period of time, and performance was thought to be more difficult to judge on technical grounds alone at higher levels than lower levels.

Aiming to examine what kind of role social capital plays in the relationship between human capital and career outcomes, particularly focusing on testing the mediation and moderation models, Lin and Huang (2005) conducted a questionnaire survey. They compared individual social capital by measuring network centrality since this captured the extent of an individual's access to resources, such as task-specific knowledge and confidential information about work-related issues. The sample consisted of 111 employees at three financial institutions in Taiwan. The participants completed a questionnaire survey about their views on networks and individual characteristics. The employees' departmental supervisors completed a questionnaire, assessing each employee's developmental potential. The findings showed: *"Social capital accounts for the relationship between human capital and developmental potential. Employees with managerial rank or longer organisational tenure can increase their social capital by occupying central positions in organizations, which would also positively influence supervisors' evaluation on individual developmental potential. This is because the employee who serves in a managerial position has been regarded as having abundant knowledge, giving an implicit signal that this person can help with solving problems at work. Similarly, the employee with longer tenure turns into the informal counselor at work because he/she understands job affair very well."*

They went on to argue that it was social capital that transformed human capital into workplace gains such as producing positive career outcomes and increasing supervisors' perception of potential. *"It appears that the central position employees occupy would not only influence their attitude toward work and organisations, but also*

influence supervisors' perceptions. It is possible that when supervisors evaluate developmental potential of employees, they will refer to behavioral cues such as networking or social interaction, and not simply observable individual characteristics."

3.3.4 Career-capital perspective

This research aims to examine an individual's career success and to uncover women's career benefits by adopting the perspective of career capital. In order to develop and refine the definition of career capital, it is important to review what is known about it in the general careers' literature.

Sullivan and Arthur (2006) indicate that there has been increased interest in the 'boundaryless career' since the publication of Arthur and Rousseau's book (1996). According to Arthur and Rousseau (1996), the concept of the 'boundaryless career' has six underlying meanings:

1. move across the boundaries of separate employers like the stereotypical Silicon Valley career;
2. draw validation and marketability from outside the present employer like those of academics or carpenters;
3. are sustained by external networks or information like those of real-estate agents;
4. break traditional organisational assumptions about hierarchy and career advancement;
5. involve an individual rejecting existing career opportunities for personal or family reasons; and
6. are based on the interpretation of the career actor, who may perceive a boundaryless future regardless of structural constraints.

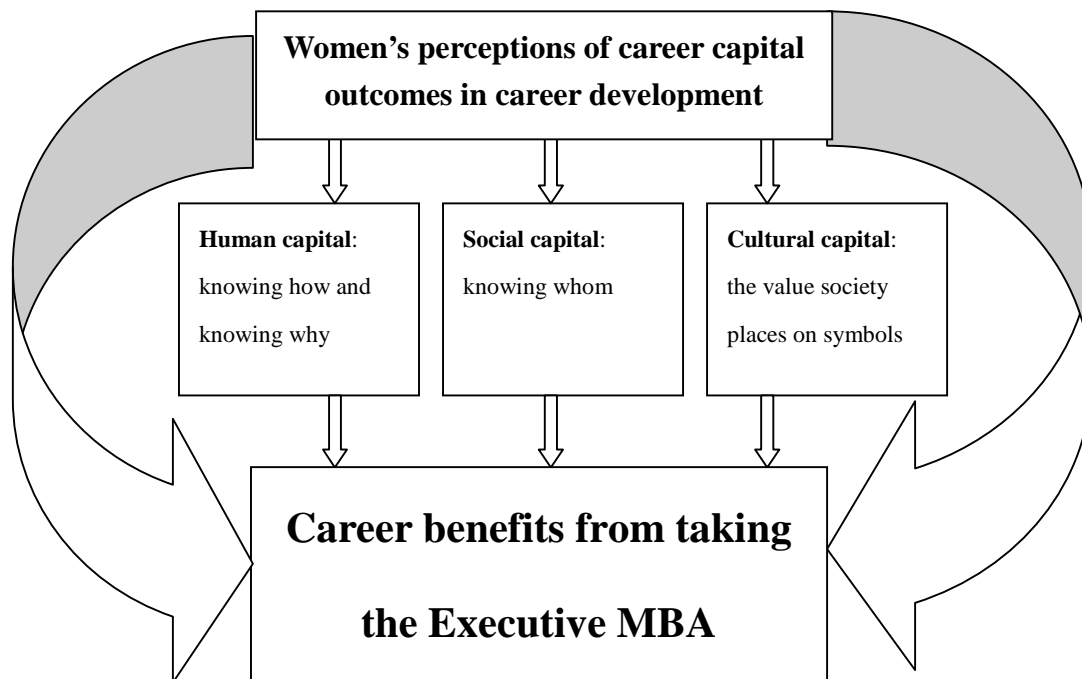
Management researchers have recently expanded their conceptualizations of career success beyond those typically studied (e.g. job promotions or salary) while simultaneously de-emphasizing external, objective measures of success (Parker & Arthur, 2000). Hall and his colleague (Hall, 1976; Hall and Mirvis, 1996) argue the importance of psychological success as a criterion by which to judge career achievement. This represents a feeling of pride and personal accomplishment that comes from knowing that an individual has done his or her personal best (Hall and Mirvis, 1996). Similarly, Parker and Arthur (2000) discuss the 'intelligent subjective career', emphasizing that how an individual feels about his or her career

accomplishments is more important than external or tangible indicators such as salary or promotions. The conceptual model of human capital, adopted by Baruch and his associates (2005)'s work on MBA graduates, has examined inner-value capital which refers to managerial competencies such as awareness or confidence. This research takes the same view by including confidence within the concept of human capital.

Looking back, Sturges & her colleagues (2003) and Simpson and her associates (2004) reported the importance of gaining intrinsic benefits (e.g. confidence or job satisfaction) while Baruch & his colleagues (2005) and Schneer and Reitman (2006) focused on external career success (e.g. salary or status) beyond the attainment of knowledge and skills as a result of completing an MBA. The theoretical work of this research is partly based on the model of career competencies developed by DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) and Inkson and Arthur (2001) in the 'boundaryless career' and tested by various scholars such as Sturges and her colleagues (2003), Dickmann and Harris (2005) and Dickmann and Doherty (2008). It also includes the concept of cultural capital by Tajfel (1981).

There are various definitions of career capital in different research settings. I argue that both the internal and external measures of career success are critical to examine female graduates' career outcomes. Human capital consists of *knowing-how* and *knowing-why* competencies and social capital is captured by *knowing-whom* competencies. I also argue that this research cannot neglect cultural capital that impacts on corporate women's careers (Useem and Karabel, 1986; Baruch et al., 2005) and it is vital to include it if the aim of the research is to fully comprehend women's career benefits. A career-capital model (see figure 4) is proposed to examine women's career benefits from completing an Executive MBA programme. I have attempted to reorder and delineate the concepts of human, social and cultural capital within the career-capital framework. Career capital consists of human capital (knowledge, skills and confidence), social capital (networks) and cultural capital (career status) in the research of female Executive MBA graduates' career success.

Figure 4: A career-capital framework examining career benefits derived from theory



Sources: DeFillippi and Arthur (1994), Inkson and Arthur (2001) and Tajfel (1981)

3.4 Females' experiences of the MBA

Existing research published in academic journals has been reviewed. Much of the management research on MBA education and graduates' career outcomes has been conducted in English-speaking countries. It is important to look at previous work which has been done prior to conducting this cross-cultural study.

A number of Western researchers have studied samples of MBA alumni on the career outcomes derived from the MBA course since graduation. Leeming and Baruch (1998) conducted a questionnaire survey, aiming to investigate why female managers did not catch up with their male counterparts in terms of seniority of position and salary, and why gender discrimination continued to exist in the careers of female managers. The sample was taken from 344 MBA graduates at one of the leading British business schools, in which 96 participants were female graduates. The proportion of women on the programme was about one-third of the total number of MBA students at this business school, which was higher than the average of 25 per cent which was usually found in British universities (AMBA, 1992; Vinnicombe, 2000). Their research questions were:

1. Did you encounter any problems of discrimination due to gender during your MBA studies?
2. Did you encounter any problems of discrimination due to gender after your MBA studies?
3. Do you think that having an MBA can reduce or eliminate discrimination problems?

The findings showed that gender discrimination was perceived more strongly in working life than during MBA studies. While studying during the MBA and at work after the MBA, gender discrimination for women was more visible than for men. Leeming and Baruch indicated that studying for an MBA was useful to women as a vehicle to increase self-confidence, and helped them to deal with gender discrimination in work organizations. The limitation of this research was that it was a snapshot study over a short period rather than a longitudinal study of how men's and women's careers progressed.

Chew and Liao (1999) carried out a questionnaire survey of 225 managers who were MBA graduates from three Singaporean universities. The aim was to explore the impact of family structures on income and career satisfaction of managers in Singapore. The sample consisted of 46 women and 179 men in their early thirties. The seven-page questionnaire contained 28 questions on bio-data, spousal employment status, parental status, domestic help status and annual income of the respondents, and information about their partners. The findings showed that men in the traditional family structure (with non-employed wife and children) had higher income than those of other family structures. Married women earned significantly more than single women. Different family structures did not effect men's and women's career satisfaction. The reason why family structure was not a good determinant for career satisfaction was due to the attitudes of Singaporeans on work-family duties and governmental policies. People viewed work and family separately from one another. In Singapore, male and female managers have enjoyed the government's three-tier generation apartment selection scheme (housing), coupled with invaluable domestic help: foreign maids, live-in parents and child care centers. The governmental policy encouraged singles to marry and to have at least three children as soon as possible. Marriage and parenthood were not generally found to be barriers to men's and women's career success.

Examining the impact of MBA studies on the careers of British graduates, Baruch and Peiperl (2000) chose a sample of 57 managers who gained an MBA degree and 129 managers who did not have an MBA in four companies. The results showed that MBA studies helped the graduates to gain an advantage over those managers without an MBA and the advantage was mainly linked to competencies. The MBA was seen as a 'passport' to management positions and it helped graduates to make a career change. Studying for an MBA in a reputable business school served as a vehicle for the creation and maintenance of a valuable network. The MBA qualification had a positive effect on remuneration when it was acquired from an elite business school. The MBA graduates gained confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. They perceived themselves to be better equipped to deal with management challenges and to be ready to take more responsibility at the workplace.

Simpson (2000) conducted a research project on the personal and career benefits of the MBA, aiming to establish the profile of MBA graduates, career progress since graduation and the career barriers that continued to exist. The original survey was conducted in 1995. Quantitative methods were used in stage one of her survey. A total of 553 questionnaires were sent to 11 business schools that were chosen on the basis of having an established part-time MBA programme in the UK. The response rate was 39.9 per cent, with 120 men and 91 women returning their questionnaires. The questionnaire consisted of three main areas. The first area was to focus on gathering information on the profile of the MBAs, in terms of age, qualifications, marital status, children and the impact of children on careers. The second area was to seek information about the labour market position of MBA graduates both before and after the programme. The last area was to ask for information on perceptions of career benefits, barriers and the effectiveness of the MBA course in overcoming the career barriers. The survey data assessed careers benefits by examining management role, function and salary levels before and after the MBA course as well as career progress and prospects.

Qualitative methods were used in stage two of her research in 1996, in order to uncover in depth the nature of personal and career benefits from the MBA and the experience of career barriers. Simpson selected 16 women and eight men on the grounds of geographical accessibility. Over a nine-month period, she conducted semi-structured interviews that were tape-recorded and analyzed using framework analysis and a grounded theory approach. The interview data showed how individuals perceived the role of the MBA in career success as benefits and which barriers the MBA graduates experienced in their careers after the MBA.

Simpson concluded that both men and women gained intrinsic (work relationship and career satisfaction) and extrinsic (salary and job status) benefits from taking the MBA. Female graduates valued the experience of studying the course which gave them more intrinsic benefits of enhanced confidence and self-worth than males, while the male graduates gained more extrinsic benefits of enhanced salary and status than the females. Both men and women placed an emphasis on the credential value of the MBA. The limitation of her research on the second stage was the small sample size.

Baruch and Leeming (2001) conducted a second survey in a leading British business school. The aim of their research was to explore how far MBA studies were justified with regard to their goals of adding value to the MBA graduates and making them better managers. The objective was to examine five propositions:

1. Having an MBA will make it easier to acquire a fulfilling job.
2. Having an MBA will increase competence and knowledge of the participants.
3. Having an MBA will provide the competencies needed for managers in organisational settings.
4. Having an MBA will increase employability, i.e. it will make it easier either to remain in employment or to find a new position rapidly.
5. Having an MBA will enhance career development.

The sample consisted of 344 male and female MBA graduates who were working as managers after graduation. About two thirds of them were British managers and the others were from many nations across the world. The results showed that the MBA helped the graduates to acquire a fulfilling job and increase knowledge and competence. The findings on competencies showed what the graduates gained from the programme. The need in business life for competencies was high. The graduates admitted to a high level of competency but attributed only a moderate contribution as coming from the programme. A small proportion of graduates (less than 25 per cent) worked for well-established companies, with nearly half working for companies under 20 years old. Almost 22 per cent of respondents worked in organizations for less than five years. The respondents indicated that they had leveraged their MBA competencies, reaping benefits from their studies and being satisfied with their careers. They reported that MBA programmes achieved the aim of producing good managers and providing graduates with managerial competencies.

Having an MBA also helped them to remain in employment or to acquire a new position fast. The narrow base (one university) of this research limited the generalisability of the findings.

Reitman and Schneer (2003) argued that the career path once promised to good managers was an uninterrupted, upward climb on a corporate ladder. When economic forces caused organizations to downsize and restructure, the promise was broken. A protean path emerged, one that was self-directed rather than company-directed, and involved changes in employment. As was mentioned before, Hall (1996) introduced the concept of the protean career, which meant that an individual was in charge of his or her career instead of an organization.

Collecting longitudinal data from American MBA graduates, Reitman and Schneer (2003) conducted quantitative research in three waves over a 13-year period. Most of the respondents resided in the north-eastern part of the US. In the first wave, a six-page survey was sent to 345 MBA graduates (chosen at a random) from a large private north-eastern university; 238 responded for a 69 percent response rate. In the second and third wave, six-page surveys were sent to the wave 1 respondents; 182 (76 percent) responded in wave 2 and 148 (62 percent) in wave 3. Those who responded in waves 2 and 3 did not differ significantly from the total group as measured by their responses in wave 1. Complete data for all three waves was acquired from 116 MBA graduates. The research covered questions about demographic and personal data (age, gender and family structure), career history (employment status and organisation size), career outcomes (salary and bonus), and career attitudes (title, salary, autonomy, responsibility, skill enhancement, skill use and opportunity for advancement).

The findings revealed that the traditional career path still existed for one third of the MBA graduates. Managers on traditional paths were older and they worked in larger organizations. They did not have greater income, managerial level, career satisfaction, company loyalty and job security than those on protean paths. Although women who remained in full-time traditional organizational employment were not on protean paths, the protean path was more supportive for women than the traditional path. Women were better able to combine work and family demands. On protean paths, women were likely to be married and to have children as men. This was not the same on the traditional paths. Women on traditional organizational career paths earned 20 per cent less than men while there was income equality on the protean paths. Almost a third of the women and the men on the protean paths reached top management level. On the traditional paths, eight times more men than women reached top management

level. The women on the protean paths were much alike the men in terms of promotions, and women were being rewarded similarly to men. The limitation of this research was the narrow base of one American university.

Simpson, Sturges, Woods and Altman (2005) examined the nature of extrinsic (number of promotions, increased management status, career change, and higher pay) and intrinsic (confidence, credibility, assertiveness, job satisfaction, and interpersonal and communication skills) benefits from the MBA and how these might vary by gender. They presented the findings of a Canadian-based survey of career benefits from the MBA. The sample was drawn from a leading business school in Ontario. A total of six hundred questionnaires were sent to MBA graduates through the alumni association. With a response rate of 36.8 per cent, 225 questionnaires were returned. Of these, 63 per cent were male graduates and 37 per cent were female graduates. The sample comprised roughly equal proportions of full-time and part-time and executive students. The questionnaire covered three key areas:

1. Personal information on the profile of the MBA graduate such as age, qualifications, marital status, children and the impact of children on careers;
2. Employment information concerning career progress such as change in function, role and pay, number and nature of promotions and career prospects;
3. Benefits and skills from the MBA, explored a range of benefits such as handling complex data, managing teams and negotiation skills.

The findings indicated that gender and age interacted to influence perceptions of career outcomes and, that both men and women gained intrinsic benefits from the MBA. However, men gained more confidence from having a wider skill set than women and women obtained more confidence from feelings of self-worth than men. Men emphasized how they had learnt to give up control and women argued that they had learnt to speak up in their work organizations. Younger men gained more in terms of extrinsic career benefits than younger women, older men and older women. They were the most mobile in terms of changing function and career, and they achieved the greatest salary increases. Younger women anticipated career improvement and, in particular, career change. Younger women achieved their goals, moving on in terms of functions, career change and pay. A substantial number of women remained in the lowest pay scales. Older men expected intellectual stimulation beyond career improvement, and they valued the enhanced confidence like older women. Older women had broad values placing importance on intrinsic benefits (credibility, job

satisfaction and interpersonal skills) to career success. Older men were the least mobile in terms of career and function change since they had already been on high-pay scales and they were least likely to perceive salary and status as benefits from the MBA. Older women were more likely to feel that they had spent too long in their present positions than younger women. Younger women shared with younger men an emphasis on extrinsic career benefits, but some of them experienced little movement in terms of pay or career change. The limitation of this research was the narrow base of one Canadian business school.

Not surprisingly, many women embarked on an MBA in order to overcome barriers they faced in their careers as women (Burke and McKeen, 1994; Simpson, 2000; Baruch and Leeming 2001). The MBA was promoted as the credential for access to a successful managerial career (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000). Nonetheless, female MBAs reported less income, less career satisfaction, and less boss appreciation than their male counterparts at mid-career, although there were no such gender differences indicated in their early career (Schneer and Reitman, 1994).

Examining whether the work environment in mid-career was comparable for male and female MBA graduates in the US, Schneer and Reitman (1994) looked at past research where there were no studies that examined gender differences in mid-career for MBA graduates. The researchers then formulated four hypotheses for their research:

1. The women MBAs will earn less income than the men;
2. The women MBAs will be less satisfied with their careers than the men;
3. The women MBAs will report their work is less appreciated by their bosses than the men;
4. The women MBAs will be more likely to report having faced discrimination in their careers than the men.

The findings revealed that the work environment was less supportive for women MBA graduates than for men. Female graduates earned less than their male counterparts. More women than men reported that their work was less appreciated. These results validated the British research on the gender differences in perception of appreciation by the boss at work (Simpson, 1998, 2000). Women were more likely to report having faced discrimination than men. Lower levels of career satisfaction were found for women than for men in mid-career since women still faced gender barriers to career

advancement following the completion of an MBA. There was no gender differences found in men's and women's early careers. The limitation of the research was that the respondents from one school in one region limited generalisability of the research and the definition of women's mid-career, in terms of age groups, was not clear.

Similar research was conducted in the UK. Simpson (1995, 1998) pointed out that female MBA graduates faced gender barriers in the labor market and in their work organisations upon graduation. British women experienced hidden barriers relating to attitudes and culture and they were disadvantaged in the workplace. Heaton, Ackah and McWhinney (2000) outlined the differences between men and women in senior management positions, and acknowledged the recent trend of an increase in female managers. Postal questionnaires were sent out and the sample consisted of 131 male MBA graduates and 56 females from one British university between 1992 and 1996. The findings showed that women's salary was substantially lower than men's. Women appeared to be less hopeful about their future prospects than men because of the perceived career barriers (prejudice from men and lack of personal motivation and confidence). British women still had a long way to go prior to reaching to the top management level while they had increased their share of employment in the professional and managerial careers.

Examining the impact of respondents' age, gender and their interaction on career progress outcomes (i.e. managerial level, number of promotions and salary) and whether age- and gender-type of contexts moderated these relationships, Goldberg, Finkelstein, Perry and Konrad (2004) chose a sample of American MBA alumni. The sample consisted of 125 males and 107 females. The findings reported that salaries of women graduates did not increase with age and men's salaries showed an increase with age. Younger men received more promotions in old-typed industry than older men since young and talented managers were anticipated to further develop their careers in workplace. Younger women received more promotions in young-typed industries than older women since ageing had more negative effects on perceptions of women than on perceptions of men. Women earned higher income in masculine-typed jobs than men, but they earned less in feminine-typed jobs than men. This result was contradictory to the existing literature which showed that women were discriminated against and they made slower progress than men in masculine-typed jobs. There were two likely explanations. First, American women in extremely masculine-typed jobs were perceived as atypical, attributed as having fewer feminine characteristics and as a result they experienced more favorable outcomes. Second, feminine jobs tended to pay lower salaries than masculine ones did. To conclude,

women's career progress in terms of salary increases and numbers of promotions was slower than men's following the completion of an MBA.

The value of the MBA has been questioned by American and Canadian scholars (Pfeffer and Fong, 2002; Minzberg and Gosling, 2002; Connolly, 2003) when MBA graduates did not gain objective career benefits such as pay and job opportunities. Pfeffer and Fong (2004) argued that American business schools faced a number of problems resulted in offering a value proposition that stressed career-enhancing and salary-increasing aspects of business education. Teaching about competition, business schools were not surprisingly caught up in their own competitive dynamics including attempts to do well in the various rankings of business schools, grow their enrolments, expand their scope and reach geographically, and increase their budgets, endowments and develop their financial support. Employers were concerned that business students were more interested in achieving their personal career goals than in learning and development. If students attended business schools simply to seek good jobs and increase their salaries in future, they would probably be disappointed if they were unable to find such a job or increase their salary sufficiently upon graduation. The business schools should reduce the need to stress placement and the job finding process by trying to attract their students with a sense of intrinsic interests in career development.

Aiming to explore the role of values, family and non-family influences on career choices in management, Ng, Burke and Fiksenbaum (2008) conducted a questionnaire survey. The sample was drawn from 109 male and female MBA students in an American university. The findings showed that family structure (married or single) did not influence the career decisions of the MBA students. Males and females placed a strong emphasis on personal development (education) in their search for occupational attainment and in achieving their career objectives, suggesting a trend towards a protean career. The types of success aspired to by the MBA students reflected a career orientation, which was a desire for career benefits and becoming wealthy. There were no gender differences in terms of the factors (i.e. education and training opportunities in career, quality of life, promotional opportunities, career opportunities and free choice in career decisions) influencing men's and women's career choice. The researchers raised their concerns about cultural influences (i.e. race and ethnicity) in the career choices of MBA students.

Simpson, Sturges, Woods and Altman (2004) conducted a comparative study of female MBA graduates in the UK and Canada. They aimed to examine the career progress of

the female MBA graduates and the nature of career barriers women experienced. The sample of the British study was taken from 11 business schools. It comprised 130 males and 91 females, with an average age of 36. The Canadian sample, which was drawn from one leading business school, comprised 140 males and 81 females. The age range of the female MBAs was between 25 and 34. Female MBA graduates in Canada tended to be younger than their counterparts in the UK, and were less likely to be married or to have children. In both countries, nearly all women were working full time and, in terms of academic background, the majority of the women had a first degree as their highest pre-MBA qualification. However, women in the UK had a more “traditional” academic background in arts and humanities compared to the concentration of men in the subjects of science and engineering. No such difference emerged in Canada, where both men and women came from a broad range of first-degree disciplines.

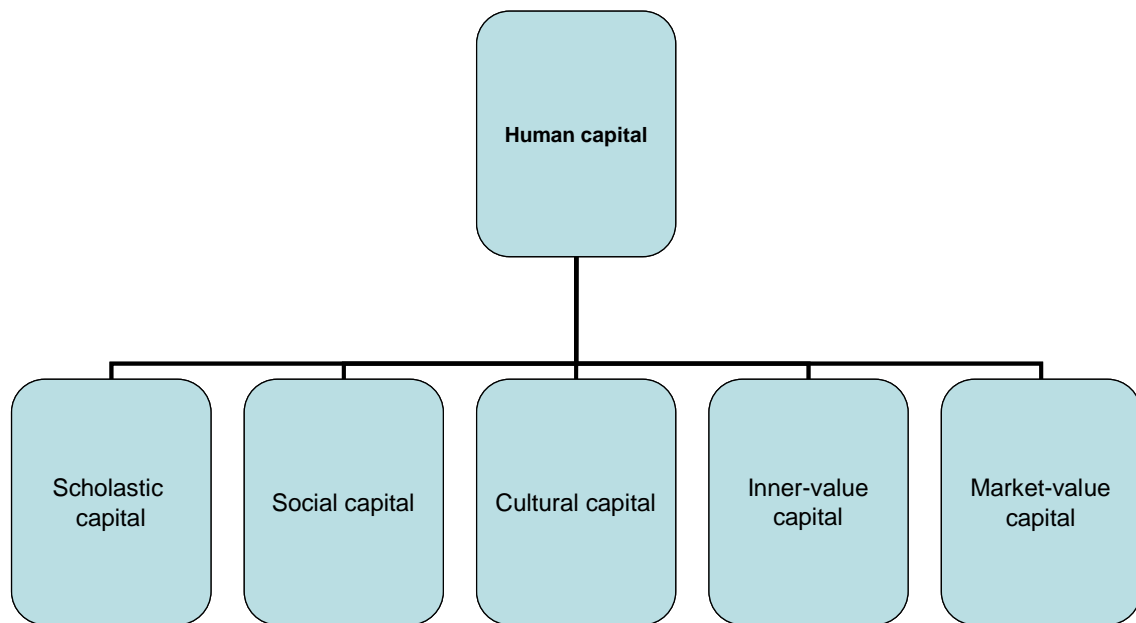
The findings of this research indicated that the British female MBA graduates lagged behind their male counterparts after the course while Canadian women had career profiles similar to men, and the British women encountered more career barriers in terms of negative attitudes and prejudice. In terms of career progress, Canadian women had a more dynamic career path (as measured by career change and movement into senior roles) than British women. They were involved in less traditionally female activities and functions in high growth areas (finance and consultancy) than their British counterparts. The British women progressed in their careers and some moved out of traditional functions such as education or training and HR. Unlike the British women, the Canadians concentrated in the private sectors where their prospects more closely reflected macro-economic conditions and which might offer more opportunities for career advancement. This research showed that the age differences had an impact on the career benefits which women gained from taking an MBA. British females were in their mid-career transition. Canadian women were much younger than the British sample.

Examining the career competencies which the graduates acquired from taking an MBA, Sturges, Simpson and Altman (2003) took a sample of male and female MBA graduates in a Canadian business school. The researchers used a resource-based perspective of how individuals might facilitate their career development in a boundaryless career environment (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Jones and DeFillipi, 1996; Jones and Lichtenstein, 2001). The conceptual model of career competencies (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994) was adopted to examine what graduates gained from studying for the MBA.

The findings revealed that confidence was an important career outcome to female MBA graduates beyond acquiring 'soft' and 'hard' skills. Women reported their reasons for increased confidence in terms of studying the managerial skills and a sense of achievement following a hard and demanding academic programme. They indicated consequences of confidence in terms of becoming more effective and efficient than before and being able to cope with change. The creation of social capital (*knowing-whom* competencies) was not seen as important to both the male and female graduates as the acquisition of *knowing-why* and *knowing-how* competencies. The researchers suggested that the culture of business schools and career stages might have had an impact on the acquisition of social capital (networks) but these two factors were not pursued in the analysis. Adopting the model of career competencies, this research was unable to examine graduates' external career success such as salary and promotions. The findings drawn from one business school did not represent the whole population of Canadian MBA graduates.

Baruch, Bell and Gray (2005) conducted a questionnaire survey, examining both objective and subjective career success measures for the graduates from the MBA and specialized MSc programmes. The sample was taken from graduates in an American university. The conceptual model was based on Useem and Karabel (1986)'s theoretical framework of analyzing scholastic capital (knowledge), social capital (networks) and cultural capital (status), but it included inner-value capital (confidence) and market-value capital (salary) (figure 5). Inner-value capital referred to the managerial competencies gained through a high sense of self-awareness, self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence. Market-value capital was described as the improved remuneration which the graduates obtained. The MBA graduates reported the acquisition of skills and knowledge as well as salary growth and an increase in hierarchical positions in their career development. In this study, however, the combination and examination of social, cultural and market-value capital within the concept of human capital was problematic. Other scholars (e.g. Sturges and Simpson) have separated the concepts of human and social capital in their research on MBA graduates' career outcomes.

Figure 5: Theoretical framework of human capital examining career success



Sources: Useem and Karabel (1986) and Baruch, Bell and Gray (2005)

Aiming to examine managers' internal and external career success relating to the acquisition of an MBA degree, Hay and Hodgkinson (2006) conducted qualitative research. The sample was drawn from 20 men and 16 women, who took the MBA programme from one British business school between 1993 and 2004. The ages of the sample ranged from 29 to 56. The findings revealed that only a small group of managers (males and younger female managers) perceived external career success as important, in terms of career advancement and growth in salary. Older managers (males and females) considered the acquisition of an MBA qualification as a learning experience. Internal career success was reported more frequently than external career success. The internal career success was defined in terms of increased confidence and career choice, thus the MBA was seen to make a qualitative difference to male and female managers' career rather than a quantitative improvement, because some of the respondents in this research were much older than those who were chosen to participate in many previous studies.

Tanova, Karatas-Ozkan and Inal (2008) conducted a comparative study on MBA students in six countries (Hungary, Israel, North Cyprus, Turkey, UK and USA). The aim was to investigate the gender and cultural factors affecting career choice and development of MBA students. In their research, female students were generally found to be interested in pursuing work in the charity sector and to be willing to

contribute more to society than males. Looking at the findings from Turkish and British samples, there were gender differences between Turkish men and women in terms of influences on career choice. Turkish women considered education and training, knowledge of the labour market, career passion and promotional opportunities, as well as training and educational opportunities as important factors in choosing and developing their careers. This was because women in Turkey tended to overcome gender biases and gender-related inequalities in the job market by improving their educational and professional qualifications. Interestingly, British men were more likely to expect to gain competence to set up their own business than their female counterparts in terms of their expectations from the MBA education. The results of this recent study drew an interest in researching the impact of cultural factors on MBA graduates' career outcomes in different geographical locations.

Similar research was conducted by Malach-Pines and Kaspi-Baruch (2008). They took a sample of MBA students in the US, the UK, Turkey, Cyprus, Hungary, Israel and India and aimed to examine the influence of culture and gender on the choice of a career in management. The findings showed large cross-cultural differences and small gender differences in the influences and aspirations associated with a career choice in management. There were no gender differences in the influence of different people on men's and women's choice of a career in management and in their 'protean' or traditional view of a career. There were small gender differences in the meaning derived from work (women tended to have greater sense of meaning in their work than men) in the expectations from an MBA degree (women tended to have higher expectations from an MBA degree to offer them with different competencies) and in the factors that influenced the choice of a career in management (women rated the training and educational opportunities in a management career, their education and training, their competence and ability as well as lack of access to other career options higher than men). Nonetheless, the cross-cultural differences found were larger than the gender differences in the sense of meaning derived from work, the expectations from an MBA degree, the degree of influence on the choice of a career in management by different people in one's family, social circle and work and the factors that have influenced the choice of a career in management. The limitation of this study was that it did not further discuss the cross-cultural differences and did not incorporate cultural factors (e.g. individualism and collectivism) influencing various choices of a career in management in the seven countries.

To summarize, cultural (national culture) differences in value systems (e.g. individualism and collectivism) have influenced men's and women's career progress in different countries. This doctoral research aims to identify the differences in women's career benefits in terms of examining the two contrasting culture systems in the UK and Taiwan.

3.5 The masculinity of the MBA

Researchers argue that the cause of the declining female enrolment at graduate business schools is the male gender bias inherent in today's business education (MacLellan and Dobson, 1997; Mavin and Bryans, 1999). Sinclair (1995, 1997, 2000) describe the Australian MBA education as a 'masculinised set of practices' that reinforce male dominance since males are in the majority as faculty members, students and the leading role-players in all the case studies. This section begins by reviewing the literature on the masculinity of the MBA in Australia and then discussing the research in the UK.

Examining women's experience of the MBA programme, Sinclair (1995) investigated whether the MBA was constructed on gendered understandings of who managers are, what they should do and how they should learn. From the overt to the embedded culture of the business schools, four elements were taken into account: curricula, teaching styles, learning styles as well as values around careers and private lives. Female MBA graduates described their feelings on the programme as disconnected and disempowered. They felt male conceptual schemes were adopted to teach female students and they went on to describe MBA work as pressured and consuming. As a result, a survival strategy for many women on the course was to keep silent. Sinclair concluded that the continuing paucity of women in top management was the existence of the 'glass ceiling' – an entrenched and exclusive executive culture which defined managerial ability in masculine terms. This culture also existed in the MBA classroom. In curricula and teaching, in learning styles, in valued careers and understandings of private lives, the MBA culture enacted and reproduced a narrow set of values which was unable to connect with the diversity of managerial experiences and aspirations of women and men enrolled on the programme. The MBA was not part of the solution to facilitating women's progress into senior management but part of the problem in its current form.

In 1997 Sinclair carried out a second research study on MBA graduates. She interviewed 16 female graduates who had completed MBA programmes in Australian and English business schools. Interviewees were asked to think of and describe experiences in which they felt that they had learned a lot, and those in which they felt their learning had been inhibited or extinguished. They identified four sources of tension in their educational experience: centralization versus decentralization of authority in the classroom; defences against admissions of uncertainty and ignorance; learning by looking outwards not inwards; and knowing through analytical replication versus imaginative and emotional engagement. The most common classroom interaction described by them was a competitive ritual in which the teacher acquired authority by relying on various sources of power – formal status, physical stature or presence, reputation as a consultant or manager in the real world. They also reported that a programmed and mechanistic approach prevailed in class and assessment tasks. Sinclair concluded that MBA programmes needed to develop a wider range of learning strategies and to adopt teaching strategies which would help female managers to learn and to understand the business world.

Sinclair (2000) continued to criticise the masculinity of management education on a basis of her teaching journey on gender. The content of curricula disclosed obstacles in terms of incomprehensibility and invisibility of masculinity. Pedagogies in management education also presented obstacles in terms of teaching styles. She argued that good teaching was a full-bodied and sexualized experience which facilitated a process of identification by students. A female teacher talking about masculinity within a predominantly male students' group complicated and confounded teaching practices. It was vital to extend curricula on gender issues to include men's and women's experience and to build a programme structure and teaching philosophy which supported learning from an individual's experience.

Following Sinclair's research and aiming to examine the gendered culture of Australian management education and its role in perpetuating a gendered culture of management, Smith (1997) conducted a questionnaire survey. The sample consisted of 50 females and 35 males on the business courses. The findings showed that the masculine bias in management education impeded men's and women's learning outcomes. Perceived gender paradigms of male faculty members resulted in female students being more disadvantaged than males. Due to the nature of quantitative research method, men's and women's perceptions on the gendered culture of today's management education were not discussed in a deep way.

Siemensma (2004) examined the values that students and staff brought to and derived from their experience of the MBA. The analysis was based upon individual and group interviews with staff, and both local and international students involved in the programme in Australia, as well as perceptions from MBA students in India recorded and transcribed between 1995 and 1997. Gender concerns expressed by local and international MBA students in Australia were contrasted with those of students in India. Of the sample, 93 students and 17 staff from three Australian MBA programmes and 18 students from two Indian programmes provided varying, conflicting perspectives on gender.

The finding showed that the MBA programme was seen to have a masculine focus, which was portrayed as objective and universal. Gender was perceived to influence women's capacity to access fair treatment within both business and university life. In both India and Australia, men were seen as the natural holders of power and authority. Both male and female staff criticized a male-dominated ethos within their organizations far more than did their students. Australian female MBA students reported that childcare was an impediment to career success. In India, the maternal role was associated with power and prestige, adding complexity to the roles of its professional women. In both countries, academics reported that masculine models precluded the discussion of important social and business issues such as equity. The MBA was seen as gendered in Australian and Indian business schools. However, this research consisted of mixed samples (international and native Australian students from three Australian programmes versus Indian students from two Indian programmes). It was unable to generalize the findings in each country's context.

Mavin and Bryans (1999) argued that business schools used an exclusive approach to the research and development of management and that they ignored the issue of gender which reinforced the notion that female managers were invisible. The masculine bias in management education disadvantaged both male and female students and discouraged these people as managers from capitalizing on gender diversity in the workplace. Change in management education by including the experiences of female academics and students would facilitate change in organisations. Business schools should take an inclusive approach by incorporating the experience and abilities of both men and women. Mavin and Bryans suggested, following Marks, Dugan and Payn's (1997) proposals, which business schools should:

- *carefully examine their courses and programmes in terms of delivery and content to determine whether they were providing the knowledge and skills that both men and women feel that they most needed to be successful managers;*
- *consider whether the learning or teaching styles employed were appropriate for the diversity of learning styles of students and of those whom schools wished to attract in the future; and*
- *consider if they were providing the knowledge and skills that would prepare graduates to transform business environments and to effectively and efficiently utilize the talents and skills of a set of diverse managers (Mavin and Bryans, 1999).*

Simpson (2006) revisited the debates on the role of MBA and the literature on what has become known as critical management education. Her research concentrated on discussing the gendered culture of management education, the values and discourses embedded in the MBA, the implications of the MBA experience for managers' performance. She summarized that management education in general and the MBA in particular were seen as gendered at two levels. First, the feminization of management did not reflect in MBA course content and design. The nature of skills and benefits from the MBA course prioritized analytical and 'hard' skills (culturally associated with masculinity) to the detriment of 'feminine' skills relating to personal and interpersonal development. Second, the MBA reflected and reproduced values associated with masculinity and that this could be seen in discourses of managerialism and rationality, which has created a masculine course climate in management education.

Having similar experiences to the British and Australian women, American females perceived the MBA as adding low value to career development and were dissatisfied with aspects of the educational environment, especially the lack of role models and mentors (Marks et al., 1997). British women reported that the MBA had helped them to overcome barriers in career development. However, the barriers still existed. The barriers created by attitudes and organizational culture continued to act to the detriment of women (Ackah, Heaton and McWhinney, 1999).

Researchers go on to argue that the learning environment of today's MBA programme is particularly suited to the male students (Sinclair, 1995, 1997, 2000; Simpson and Sturges, 2004; Vinnicombe, 2005; Simpson, 2006). In their writing, Vinnicombe and Singh (2003) suggested that the development process for women was not the same as

the development process for men. Different development programmes from the traditional MBA were required for women to have an equal chance to succeed. Men's development was linked to increasing autonomy and separation from others as a means of strengthening identity and empowering themselves. Only much later in men's development were they ready to explore intimacy and to accept others as equally important to themselves. Likewise, it was much later in women's development that they tolerated separation and saw themselves as equal to others. On women-only management programmes, female students could contribute openly, their femininity could be freely expressed, and they could demonstrate authenticity to their values. Hence gender differences and inequalities in the MBA classroom talk needed to be considered, not only in the light of unequal relations between males and females but in the light of the increasing attention devoted to the development of different skills and the recognition of the role played by talk in female students' learning (Wilson, 1995; Siemensma, 2004). Business schools and their MBA programmes must create environments attractive to women if they expect more female students to take the MBA studies (Vinnicombe, 2005).

3.6 Research rationale and questions

This section presents the research gap and proposes the research questions which add to the existing research on female MBA graduates and their career benefits by integrating women's career stages and cultural backgrounds. The research also seeks to redefine the concepts of human, social and cultural capital.

3.6.1 Research gap

I have reviewed existing research on MBA graduates and career outcomes published in academic journals. These research studies have jointly contributed to an understanding of the comparable career outcomes enjoyed by men and women following the completion of an MBA, although the findings are often inconsistent and even contradictory. These apparent inconsistencies and contradictions are explained through use of the conceptual model (see figure 6) of existing literature on page 78, which draws on theory from women's career success (Sturges, 1999), career stages (Levinson, 1996; Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005), the masculinity of the MBA programme (Sinclair, 1995, 1997, 2000; Smith, 1997; Simpson, 2006), and the career-capital perspective (Tajfel, 1981; DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Inkson and Arthur 2001). No research on the career benefits of female Executive MBA graduates has been conducted in Asia.

Studying for an MBA is seen by students as the most effective catalyst for career development (AMBA, 2006), and is considered by graduates as a 'passport' to career success (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000). Female MBA graduates in the US do not experience the same salary increases or enjoy the same numbers of management promotions as their male counterparts (Cox and Harquail, 1991). Schneer and Reitman (1994) argue that no gender differences are found between male and female graduates in early career. American female MBA graduates report less pay, less job satisfaction and less management recognition than male graduates in mid-career (Schneer and Reitman, 1994). Little research in the UK has examined the age differences and career stages which have an impact on the graduates' career outcomes. Little empirical data in comparative studies across the globe indicate the cultural factors which may influence the differences in career benefits from taking the MBA studies.

The research in the UK supports the American findings that the MBA degree may not help women as much as men in terms of salary growth and career advancement, but the MBA is an important vehicle to equip both men and women with knowledge, skills and confidence (Simpson, 1998, 2000; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch and Leeming, 2001). Other career benefits include gaining a professional credential relevant to both employers and employees (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Baruch et al., 2005) and entry into valuable networks (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Sturges et al., 2003). The weakness of existing research on MBA graduates and their career outcomes (Sturges et al., 2003; Baruch et al., 2005; Schneer and Reitman, 2006) has been the use of single samples. This doctoral study aims to address the weakness of previous research (the use of single sample and quantitative method) by selecting a stratified sample from female Executive MBA graduates at leading business schools in the UK and Taiwan, and inviting them to participate in semi-structured qualitative interviews.

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) have developed the concept of the "kaleidoscope" career to examine how women have different drivers in the various career stages – challenge, balance and authenticity. Other American researchers agree that there are three phases in women's career development, reflective of early, middle and later career stages: idealism, endurance, and reinvention (O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005). Women in early career (ages 24-35) choose their careers based on their desires for career satisfaction, achievement and success. They experience positive career movements such as promotions. However, the issue of how to combine career and family emerges. Women in mid-career (ages 36-45) manage their careers by balancing multiple responsibilities both personally and professionally. They have to make

choices between parenthood and career commitment. Women in their late career (ages 46-60) work in arenas that offer them an opportunity to contribute meaningfully through their work. They are less likely to struggle with work and family demands than those in the other two life stages. No research on female managers' career stages has been conducted in the UK and Taiwan. There are various views on different age groups at different career stages (Levinson, 1996; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005; Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005). In this thesis, I argue that just as career stage impacts the drivers in a woman's career, it may similarly impact a woman's drivers for taking an MBA and thereby her career benefits, the subject of this research.

A review of existing research has shown that only a few studies have included Executive MBA graduates. The Executive MBA programme is an interesting programme since the students are generally full-time professional managers with considerable work experience. The employers are closely involved through sponsoring students (Bickerstaffe, 2005, 2008), thus it is possible that the graduates may define the career benefits of taking an Executive MBA degree differently from their colleagues on the full-time MBA programme. Taiwanese business schools offer predominantly part-time Executive MBA courses. People on the Taiwanese Executive MBA programme have profiles similar to the British population. They must be working managers with a number of years' work experience. Much research in the UK and Asia indicates that work-family conflict impedes women's participation in senior management. This research aims to examine whether the individual's characteristics (age, managerial experience and family structures) have an impact on women's career benefits in Taiwan, and whether cultural differences (British and Taiwanese) influence women's perspectives on career success.

3.6.2 Research questions

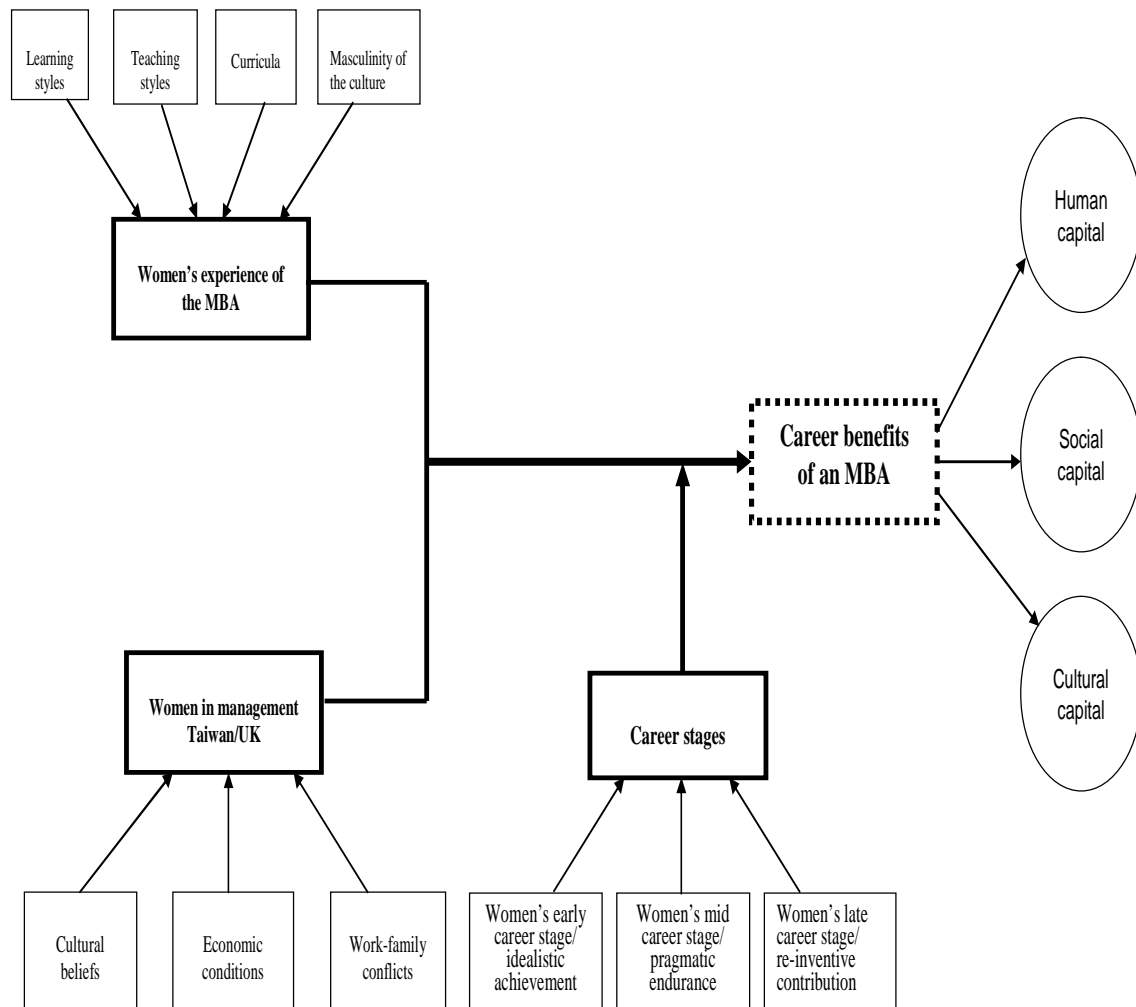
To fill the gap in the existing literature on women and their career benefits from completing an Executive MBA programme in the UK and Taiwan, the research question is:

How do British and Taiwanese women perceive the career benefits gained from taking the Executive MBA programme?

This involves the following sub-questions:

- How do women perceive the acquisition of human capital?
- How do women perceive the acquisition of social capital?
- How do women perceive the acquisition of cultural capital?
- Are there differences of career benefits between the British and Taiwanese samples and, if so, are they attributable to culture and/or the characteristics of the individuals, namely, age differences, managerial experiences and family structures?

Figure 6: Conceptual model of the literature on factors that have affected female MBA graduates' career outcomes



CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research strategy and methods which are chosen to conduct the research. It begins with the philosophical perspective. The research design is described, including the methods adopted, the research setting and the selection of participants. The last section describes the methods used to conduct the analysis of interview data, including the use of computer software.

4.1 The Philosophy of Social Enquiry

In social science research, the choice of appropriate research methodology is influenced by several factors, two of the most important being the nature of the particular inquiry and research questions (Yin, 1993) and personal philosophical perspective (Blaikie, 1993). The philosophical stance is critical since it provides the assumptions made about the nature of the phenomena by the researcher (the ontology), and the way in which evidence of that phenomena can be acquired (the epistemology). As a result, new knowledge about the phenomena is uncovered through carefully designed research. Approaches in social science research range from the objective scientific style to the subjective constructive style. This career-benefits research adopts a subjective perspective by asking for female managers' perceptions of the subjective and objective career outcomes from studying an MBA.

4.2 Ontological and epistemological stances

The aim of this research is to identify female managers' definitions of career benefits of studying an Executive MBA programme and to find out differences and similarities which exist between British and Taiwanese women (women with different cultural backgrounds) and, in particular, younger and older women (women at different life stages) and junior, middle and senior managers (women with different managerial experiences). The strategy adopted for the research is based upon a realist approach and the use of qualitative interview methods as the way of enquiry.

4.2.1 Ontological stance

Ontology refers to the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality (Blaikie, 1993). It makes claims about the existence of social reality - what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other.

Choice of ontology is a starting point for philosophical debates in management research and is described as a dichotomy between positivism and phenomenology (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991), and objectiveness and subjectiveness (Morgan and Smircich, 1980; Partington, 2000). Other ontological poles in the literature include naïve realism and relativism (Lincoln and Guba, 2000), and positivism and social constructivism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Positivism deduces theory through hypothesis testing and social constructivism generates theory from data.

Realism occupies the middle ground between positivism and social constructivism (Rousseau, Manning and Denyer, 2008). The realist approach sees the world as tangible, external, and one in which truth can only be discovered by establishing a direct correspondence between observations and the phenomena (Blaikie, 1993). The realist shares with the positivist a conception of science as an empirically based, rational and objective enterprise, the purpose of which is to provide true explanatory and predictive knowledge of nature (Bhaskar, 1989).

The choice of research philosophy in this doctoral study is made on the basis of the nature of the research question and my personal beliefs about the world and personal preferences in conducting the research. My educational background and teaching experience in business studies in Taiwan, as well as my PhD training at Cranfield School of Management, inform the preferences. First, much existing research on MBA education and objective, external career success of male and female graduates has adopted quantitative methods. The aim of this research is to gain female managers' perceptions on both the objective and subjective career outcomes in order to rebalance the focus from the quantitative methods to analyse their objective career success such as salary increases and promotions. Second, The International Centre for Women Leaders, where I conduct my doctoral study, is renowned for using qualitative methods to research the issues on women's managerial careers. As an Asian woman whose native language is not English, I feel challenged taking the qualitative approach which will involve a rigorous analysis of text or discourse. Fortunately, there are a number of experienced faculty members and fellow doctoral students who have been adopting qualitative methods and who are willing to offer support in data collection and analysis at Cranfield. Thus, a realist approach is proposed and a qualitative interview method is chosen to conduct the research on women's career benefits in the UK and Taiwan.

4.2.2 Epistemological stance

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge presenting a view and justification for what can be regarded as knowledge, what can be known and what criteria such knowledge must satisfy in order to be called knowledge rather than beliefs (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Blaikie, 1993). Means of acquiring knowledge may vary with social context and with different phenomena. As a result no single epistemology of social science is right or wrong. The epistemology of the social sciences is inclined to be more complex and diverse than that of the natural sciences, reflecting the more complex phenomena associated with social science research. Realism's epistemology seeks to understand the intervening mechanisms which may indicate causal relationships (Bhaskar, 1989). The realist approach is to ask "why", and the reasons may be explained by "how" questions. This research asks how female managers perceive their career benefits from studying for an MBA and thus to uncover why there are similarities and differences in career benefits in the UK and Taiwan.

While adopting a qualitative interview method in the study, I have tried to maintain as objective a stance as possible. This was achieved by:

- being open, showing a willingness to listen and to "give voice" to respondents;
- hearing what respondents wish to say, seeing what respondents do and reporting these as accurately as possible;
- gaining an understanding, while recognizing that my understanding is based upon the values, culture, training and experiences that I bring to the research situations and that these might be quite different from those of my respondents.

4.2.3 Feminism

Academic journals have published much management research based upon the male norm or by presenting findings of the research as gender neutral (Hall-Taylor, 1997; Mavin and Bryans, 1999). The literature of organizational scholarship has been written by men, for men and about men (Calas and Smircich, 1996). Women's experiences have been undervalued by society and by scientific enquiry (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008). Feminism critiques science as having been predominantly constructed by men. Feminist ontology sees the world as socially constructed by men and women who have had different experiences (Blaikie, 1993).

Women enact their careers differently from men (Powell and Mainiero, 1992). From an epistemological perspective, feminism puts forward women's experience as a foundation for knowledge. Broadly, there are several feminist positions: liberal, radical, psychoanalytic, Marxist, socialist, postmodern and Third World/Post Colonial (Calas and Smircich, 1996). Table 4 is a brief summary of feminist approaches on conception of human nature, conception of sex/gender, epistemological positions and some favored methodologies.

Table 4: A brief summary of feminist approaches

	Conception of human nature	Conception of sex/gender	Epistemological positions	Some favoured methodologies
Liberal	Individuals are autonomous beings capable of rationality.	Sex is part of essential biological endowment, a binary variable. Gender is socialised onto sexed human beings for appropriate behaviour.	Positivist, gender-neutral objectivity.	Positivist social science.
Radical	Human beings are fundamentally embodied sexed beings.	'Sex class' is the condition of women as an oppressed class. Gender is a social construction that ensures women's subordination to men.	Holistic female-centred knowledge is possible outside of patriarchal structure.	Consciousness-raising groups and case studies.
Psychoanalytic	Human nature develops biologically and psychosexually.	Individuals become sexually-identified as part of their psychosexually development. Gender structures a social system of male domination which influences psychosexual development.	Women's way of knowledge is different from men's because of different psychosexual development.	Clinical case studies, focus on context-specific social relations and developmental processes; life histories.
Marxist	Human nature reflects historical, material conditions. The human essence is the ensemble of social relations.	Gender is part of historical class relations which constitute systems of oppression under capitalism.	Feminism must take the standpoint of an oppressed class under capitalism for their knowledge interests to represent those of the social totality.	Econometrics, historical analyses of macro-social data.
Socialist	Human nature is created historically and culturally through dialectical interrelations among human biology, society and human labour.	Gender is processual and socially constituted through several intersections of sex, race, ideology and experiences of oppression under patriarchy and capitalism.	Feminism standpoints represent a particular historical condition of oppression that is more adequate for understanding contemporary society.	Case studies, institutional ethnographies, ethnomethodology focus on micro-social activities as they connect to macro-social processes.
Postmodern	Decentering of the rational, self-present subject of humanism. 'Subjectivity' and 'consciousness' are discursive effects.	Sex/gender are discursive practices that constitute specific subjectivities through power and resistance in the materiality of human bodies.	'Epistemology' is problematised by the heterogeneity of subject positions and social identities	Textual analyses, deconstruction, Foucauldian genealogies.
Third World/ Post Colonial	Analysed as a Western construct that emerged by making its 'other' invisible or 'almost' human. Also 'strategic essentialism'.	Considers the constitution of complex subjectivities beyond Western conceptions of sex/gender focusing on gendered aspects of globalization processes.	'Knowledge' is a system of power relations deployed by the 'West' on 'the rest'. Other's subjectivities are possible.	Textual analyses, postcolonial deconstructions, testimonial writings, hybrid representations.

Source: *From 'the woman's' point of view: feminist approaches to organisation studies* by Calas and Smircich 1996

Feminist theory is women-centered, stressing all women's values and that women are not subordinated to men (Calas and Smircich, 1996). Highly influenced by my PhD supervisor, who is a feminist, this research adopts a radical feminist approach; the perspective is committed to change and to producing a better world for both women and men (Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988; Blaikie, 1993). It is based upon a sample of women only and aims to focus exclusively on their career benefits from taking an Executive MBA. It may discover some aspects of the career outcomes which they may not have considered in depth before.

4.2.4 The choice of research strategy

The philosophical perspective has led me to taking a realist approach and adopting qualitative semi-structured interviews as a research method. The aim was to acquire knowledge about female managers' perceptions of career benefits as a result of studying for an Executive MBA in the UK and Taiwan.

4.3 Research design

The focus of this research was to uncover the career benefits which female graduates acquired from completing the Executive MBA programme. Much of the previous research in the UK which relates to this subject has used quantitative methods (e.g. Simpsons, 1996, 2000, Simpson et al., 2005). The use of a pilot study would help me to clarify the suitability of the qualitative method chosen. The results of the pilot study would show whether the qualitative method would encourage research participants to talk freely and candidly on what actual career benefits they perceived. There was a concern about my inexperience of using qualitative interview methods. The interview technique gained from the pilot study enabled me to feel confident and carry out the main study's interviews effectively in the British and Taiwanese field work. This will be discussed in Section 4.5.2.

4.3.1 Sampling strategies

A key weakness of previous research on MBA graduates and their career outcomes (Sturges et al., 2003; Simpson et al., 2004; Simpson et al., 2005) has been the use of single samples. One business school in one region cannot represent the population of all MBA graduates in one country. Existing research studies published in academic journals have been reviewed and it was found that little has included Executive MBA graduates. In the UK, the Executive MBA programme is an interesting programme since the people studying for the Executive MBA are generally full-time professional

managers with considerable work experience. The employers are closely involved through sponsoring students (Bickerstaffe, 2005, 2008); thus it is possible that the MBA graduates may define the career benefits of taking an Executive MBA degree differently from their colleagues on the full time MBA programme. People on the Taiwanese Executive MBA programme have profiles similar to the population in the UK: they must be working managers with a number of years' work experience (Taipei Times, 2005).

This research aims to address the weakness of existing research by selecting a stratified sample of female Executive MBA graduates from three leading business schools in the UK and Taiwan respectively. The sample was taken from the female graduates who completed the Executive MBA in 2004, thus allowing them time (about two years) to reap career benefits from their Executive MBA qualifications in the job market, and to remember reasonably well the career benefits acquired from taking the programme.

Reviewing the existing literature on women's MBA experience, scholars argued that the masculinity of the MBA (Sinclair, 1995, 1997, 2000; Smith, 1997; Mavin and Bryans, 1999; Simpson and Sturges, 2004; Simpson, 2006), in terms of the male-dominated faculty and student body, has influenced teaching styles, learning styles, curricula and work values in today's business schools. No research studies on MBA graduates and their career benefits have taken into account the issue of the gender balance of faculty and student body. While the masculinity of the Executive MBA *per se* was not studied in this research, the gender demography, in terms of the percentage of women in the Executive MBA cohort, was controlled in selecting the business schools.

In the UK, the percentages of women on the Executive MBA programme (in 2004) varied from 18 per cent of female students to 28 per cent. Leading British business schools are listed in the top 75 Executive MBA programmes in the Financial Times (published in 2005). Accordingly, three schools were chosen for their different gender demography: London Business school (18% women on the course), Cass Business School (21% women on the course) and Cranfield School of Management (28% women on the course). Similarly, three leading business schools were selected from the list of top 15 business schools (in 2004) in Taiwan (there was no equivalent MBA ranking in Taiwan to the Financial Times in the UK). National Sun Yat-sen University had the lowest proportion of women (16%) on the course. National Cheng Chi University had a medium percentage of female students (22%) on the programme.

Since there were many more women in the Executive MBA cohort in Taiwan, it was easy to select a school with a high percentage of women. National Cheng Kung University was then chosen with the highest proportion of female students (42%) on the Executive MBA programme.

4.3.2 Research settings

There were a number of considerations for the selection of three British business schools and three Taiwanese business schools. First, the six chosen schools are leading business schools in the UK and Taiwan. Existing literature showed that the MBA degree added symbolic value to the graduates' CVs (Baruch and Leeming, 2001; Baruch et al., 2005) hence it was important to choose comparable schools. Secondly, the six business schools all target their programmes at students who wish to change their career directions or enhance their managerial careers as a result of studying new skills and acquiring business knowledge (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994; Sturges et al., 2003). Thirdly, the six business schools have well-established alumni offices and career development services which provide invaluable support for students and graduates through networking and career events as well as project and recruitment opportunities. This enables male and female graduates to remain in touch with the latest developments and teaching at their respective business schools and to continue learning long after they have graduated. Lastly, the masculinity of the MBA programme is criticized by scholars (e.g. Sinclair, Smith and Simpson). The percentage of female students on the programme may be an indicator of the masculinity, and may influence women's career benefits.

4.3.3 Business schools

This section aims to present a brief overview of the chosen business schools in the research. The information about the three British business schools is based upon the recent book written by Bickerstaffe (2008). The profiles of the three Taiwanese business schools are acquired from their school websites and personal conversations with the heads of alumni offices.

London Business School is probably the best-known globally of all the British business schools and is one of the world's truly global schools. It maintains its position through a series of strategic initiatives, including fostering world-class research and making the most of its location in London. The MBA is a strongly academic, intensive general management programme with a good deal of practical emphasis. It is international in philosophy and scope and every student must master a

second language other than English in order to graduate. The Executive MBA programme requires students to take an international field trip and to submit a graded project and report carried out in the students' own organisations. The School is accredited by AACSB in the US (Bickerstaffe, 2008).

Cranfield School of Management is one of the longest-established business schools with a strong international orientation. It has close links with companies and other schools and geographic regions. The MBA programme is well-regarded but the School also puts a strong emphasis on executive education and has extensive research expertise across a wide area. The part-time Executive MBA is largely aimed at sponsored students. A strong personal and professional development course runs throughout the programme, based upon an assessment of individuals' strengths and weaknesses. The programme is accredited by AACSB in the US (Bickerstaffe, 2008).

Cass Business School is based in the centre of the City of London, one of the world's leading financial centres. Its links with business are excellent and the list of visiting speakers is impressive. The full-range school is big by European standards and makes a point of combining an intellectual, academic approach with business-oriented practicality. The part-time evening Executive MBA is more or less identical to the full-time version and is taken over two years. Students take core courses in the first year, and eight elective courses and a business project in the second year. The programme is accredited by AACSB in the US (Bickerstaffe, 2008).

National Sun Yat-sen University is based in Kaohsiung, in the south of Taiwan. Kaohsiung is the second largest city in Taiwan. The university is widely recognised as an important research and learning institution with an international reputation. In 2005, the School of Management was the first educational institution in Taiwan to receive AACSB International accreditation, which represents the highest standard of achievement that the School has accomplished. The Executive MBA aims to teach students the theory and methodology of contemporary management to prepare them for management responsibility in a global business environment.

National Cheng Chi University is located in the southern part of Taipei City, the capital of Taiwan. It aims to pass on its tradition in teaching skills and disseminating knowledge of humanities and social sciences and producing leaders for the new century. The Business School is accredited by AACSB. Its Executive MBA focuses on enhancing the managerial competencies of participants to deal with the greater environmental turbulence and hyper-competition and to sensitize the participants to the

need for a constant re-assessment of the external and internal environments of their organizations.

National Cheng Kung University is based in Tainan, situated on the south-east coast of Taiwan. The university has evolved from its engineering origin to become a comprehensive research and international university in the Asian Pacific. The School of Management is accredited by AACSB. In addition to teaching, faculty members are encouraged to devote themselves to research in management education and learning. Offered to top-level managers, the Executive MBA programme aims to provide them with an effective way of acquiring up-to-date management knowledge and skills.

4.3.4 Participants

At each business school, six female graduates were chosen to be interviewed. The alumni office at the each school selected randomly six women to participate in the interviews. The research comprised 36 women in total from the six business schools. Female graduates who were not employed or self-employed were excluded since the focus was on corporate women both in the public and private sectors. Initially, the research aimed to examine women's mid-career benefits. Following the pilot study, it was clear that many British women embarked on the Executive MBA programme in their late twenties and early thirties. Taiwanese women chose to take the Executive MBA programme in their mid and late thirties and early forties. The ages of the participants varied between 30 and 45. Drawing on the research of women's early and mid-career development phases by O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005), the research focused on women's early (aged 30-34) and mid-career (age 35-45) stages.

Between 2006 and 2007, a series of semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with a total of 36 British and Taiwanese who agreed to participate in this career-benefit research. Of 18 female graduates from the British business schools, seven were senior managers, ten were middle managers and one was a junior manager. The average age was 35. The women in the British sample were employed in the private (94%) and voluntary (6%) sectors, covering a range of functions such as finance, accounting, IT and manufacturing. The majority of the female participants (83%) were fully sponsored and the rest of the women (17%) were partially supported by their employers. Of 18 female graduates from the Taiwanese business schools, eleven were senior managers, six were middle managers and one was a junior manager. The average age was 41. The majority of the female participants (88%) in the

Taiwanese sample were employed in the private sector, mainly in service organisations such as financial services or advertising and mass media, and a few women (12%) in the public sectors. Taiwanese employers do not usually sponsor their employees. The majority of the female participants in the sample (89%) paid the full fees of their Executive MBA course themselves. The employers supported the rest of the women (11%) by paying some of the fees.

All interviews were conducted face to face. They were tape-recorded and transcribed. Prior to the interviews, the participants received via e-mail five main interview questions with a brief summary of the research objectives and scopes (see Appendix A). The e-mail to Taiwanese participants was translated into Mandarin. The interviews lasted about one and a half hours. The names of all participants are disguised in this thesis to protect their identities.

4.4 Method

Prior to the interviews with female participants, conversations were carried out with the heads of alumni offices at the six business schools. The aim was to gain an understanding of Executive MBA graduates' backgrounds and their career development opportunities.

A semi-structured interview schedule was designed for use with the 36 individual respondents to elicit information in the areas of career benefits which women perceived from taking the programme at early and mid-career. There were three main questions and a number of probe questions used in the interviews:

1. Tell me about your career.
2. **Before the Executive MBA, how did you think that the programme could help you to develop your career?**
3. **What are the career benefits which you have gained from taking the programme?**
4. **How have you been using the Executive MBA to advance your career?**
5. How is your career likely to develop?

Probe questions:

1. What did you mean by that?
2. That's interesting. Could you give me an example?
3. Could you please describe in as much detail as possible?
4. Have you thought about ...?
5. Do you have further examples of this?
6. Could you say something about your family?

The interviews were conducted at a place chosen by the participants, generally in their offices or a meeting room in their companies. Providing the broad questions prior to the interviews would help participants to reflect deeply on the career benefits they acquired from taking the Executive MBA.

The first question of the interview was to uncover women's career history. Participants were asked to describe their career to date, starting from when they finished their first degrees. The objective of this question was to let the participants warm up and think about their career history and how they felt about it.

The second question of the interview aimed to find out why participants chose to study for an Executive MBA and how they thought that the programme could help them to develop a managerial career. The purpose of this question was to explore their motivation for selecting the Executive MBA programme and their choices of business schools.

The third question of the interview sought to uncover the career outcomes which women acquired from taking the Executive MBA. This was obviously the focus of each interview. Probe questions were used here in order to make the participants think about what career benefits they had gained in a deeper way.

The fourth question of the interview aimed to explore how women used the Executive MBA to advance their professional and managerial careers. Probe questions were used more often than the first three questions with a view to helping the participants to remember their career progression following the completion of the programme.

The last question of the interview sought to let participants think about their career development in future years. Beyond possible career paths, the participants were requested to describe their families in order to gain a clear picture of female managers' working and family life.

4.5 Field work

The field work was conducted over a period of approximately 12 months, starting from the summer of 2006 and finishing in the summer of 2007. The pilot study took place at the two British business schools in early summer of 2006. The interviews for the main study in the UK began in October 2006 and finished in June 2007. The field work in Taiwan was carried out over a period of approximately two months, starting from the beginning of July 2007 and finishing at the end of August 2007.

4.5.1 Pilot study

It was decided to choose four women from Cranfield School of Management and four women from Cass Business School, who completed the programme in 2004. The recruitment of the participants was conducted by a member of alumni office at each business school. The alumni offices were informed about the purpose and scope of this career-benefit research prior to the recruitment. The first four women in each business school, who agreed to take part in the research, were then contacted to arrange a time and location for the face to face interviews to take place.

The sample from Cranfield School of Management consisted of four female managers, with an average age of 34. They worked in various functions, including finance, accounting, and manufacturing. Of the sample, one female manager was married with one son and one was married without children; the other two female managers were single. The sample from Cass Business School consisted of four female managers, with an average age of 35. They worked in various functions, including marketing, finance, and research and development. Of the sample, two women were married without children and one was married with two daughters; one woman was unmarried but living with her partner when the interview took place.

4.5.2 Personal learning from the pilot study

The first interview was carried out in London. The interviewee offered to conduct the meeting at her office near Oxford Street. Given that she was a fast speaker, I asked her to speak slowly a number of times during the interview. After transcribing the tape, the interviewee was found to spend a lot of time talking about the first question (career history) and not the subsequent three main questions.

It was also found that the use of probing questions was difficult, mainly due to nerves on my part. Following the meeting with my PhD supervisor, I wrote down the five open questions with a series of probes on the desk when the next interview was conducted.

The second interview took place in Basildon. The participant was an engineer. She was friendly and chatty, and spoke slowly. I felt more comfortable with the interview situation than the first one. After showing the transcript of the second interview to my supervisor, I was advised to use the probes more frequently in the interview, and focus more on uncovering career benefits in a deeper way. Following the third interview with an employee of Rolls Royce in Derby, my supervisor was sufficiently reassured that the interview technique was satisfactory, and instructed me to continue with the remainder of my pilot interviews. She also advised me to check with the three interviewees on any subjects which were not clear while I was transcribing the interview data.

Following the eight interviews, I learnt the importance of encouraging the participants to reflect on their Executive MBA experience and perceptions of career benefits through probing. For example, 'have you thought about ...?'; 'Did you know that ...?' The second way was to use explanatory probes such as: 'What did you mean by that?'; 'Could you please give me an example?'; 'Could you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which ...?' The third was to involve a silent probe, which utilized a simple pause allowing the participants to break the silence. In addition, smiling and nodding could encourage them to reveal more details.

The pilot study showed that participants focused largely on talking about the acquisition of human and cultural capital. The findings were concentrated on human capital in terms of knowledge, skills and confidence, and cultural capital in terms of career status leading to salary increases, management promotions, career opportunities and personal reputation. In particular, growth in confidence was examined in terms of discussing the anticipations, development and outcomes of confidence. This

reinforced the findings of previous research on British MBA graduates' career outcomes (Simpson et al., 2004; Hay and Hodgkinson, 2006).

4.5.3 Main study

The main study was an extension of the pilot. It began in October 2006 and spread over approximately nine months. In the main study, the female graduates were selected and recruited by alumni offices at each business school which were aware of the requirements of participants. I have been based at Cranfield School of Management and contacted the head of alumni office by telephone for the interviews. Appendix B shows e-mails between me and alumni offices at the five business schools.

Given that many women in Taiwan embarked on the Executive MBA in their mid to late thirties and early forties, the ages of Taiwanese participants varied between 35 and 45. The Taiwanese interviews were conducted in Mandarin since the participants were likely to express themselves freely and accurately in their native language. A high standard of English was the norm from the participants as some of them had gained GMAT scores of 550 prior to the Executive MBA. Discussions were held in English for clarification where necessary. The translation was checked by another Mandarin speaker to ensure accuracy of the transcribed interview data.

It is important to note that the four participants of National Cheng Kung University were younger than others in the Taiwanese sample. They were junior and middle managers in their work organisations. This reflected the general profiles of male and female students in the Executive MBA cohort at the National Cheng Kung University.

Unlike the population at Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School, female participants from London Business School were more senior in terms of managerial experiences. The average age of the LBS sample was also different, at 37; the average age of Cranfield was 34 and; the average age of Cass was 35. In the pilot study, one woman from the Cass Business School was 45 years old but her age did not represent the average age of the female students in the cohort. Females who chose to study for an Executive MBA at Cranfield and Cass were in their late twenties and early thirties; many of them were junior and middle managers prior to the programme. Appendix C shows a sample interview transcript.

4.6 Ethical considerations

Prior to the data-gathering stage, I submitted the Cranfield School of Management Ethical Form which was then approved by the School's Ethical Committee.

Informed consent is one of the critical considerations in research and involves research participants agreeing to be subjects of the research after being presented with all the relevant facts. In this research, informed consent was gained through initial contact with the alumni office at each chosen business school. Approval was given for access after presenting the interview questions to the alumni offices. Prior to conducting the interviews, the participants were given a brief summary of the research and five main interview questions. Each participant was asked for permission to record the interview, and everyone was aware that the interview would be transcribed and quotations would be used in the thesis and future publications.

Confidentiality is another important consideration in this qualitative research. To protect the rights of the participants, their real names are not disclosed in this thesis.

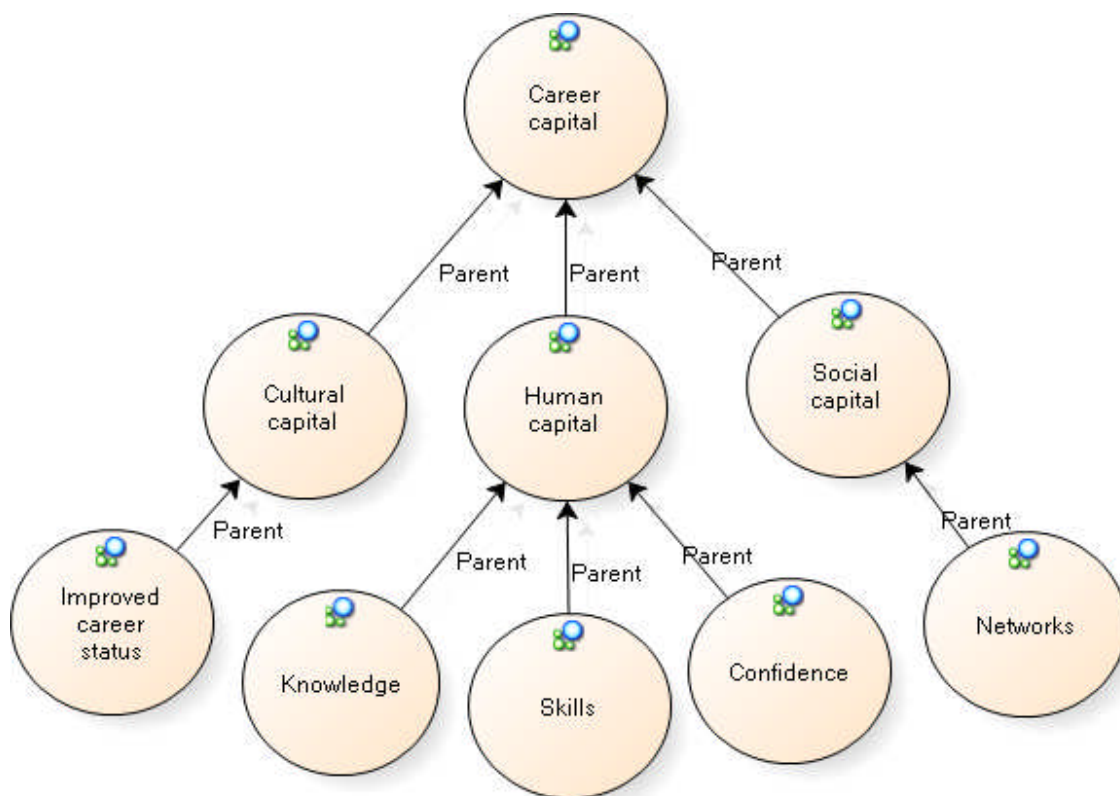
4.7 Data analysis

All interviews were transcribed and then rich text format transcripts were imported into NVivo new software (version 7.0). A list of nodes was established for coding references to the themes of human, social and cultural capital. The software was used to search and code each interview document for the occurrence of relevant themes. The unit of analysis for the first coding was the phrase or a mention. The career benefit was coded twice for determining the initial category when an interviewee provided similar items of career benefit twice, but using different words. Then a fellow management researcher was invited to be a second coder. Analyzing each interviewee's answer to the question, both of us coded each career benefit on the coding list. To ensure reliability, we read transcripts carefully together in order to corroborate the categorizations of individual phrases, sentences and paragraphs. We then compared results and reconciled any disagreements through a process of review and discussion.

The coding framework (see Appendix D) was refined during the process of reading and re-reading the interview transcripts. The coding was developed to uncover each concept of human, social and cultural capital, reflecting interviewees' comments and informed by previous literature on the detail of the dimensions of human, social and cultural capital outcomes (see below model 1). For example, the concept of human

capital was defined as educational attainment, consisting of three dimensions of knowledge, skills and confidence (Simpson et al., 2004, 2005) and, in particular, confidence was examined by discussing the anticipations, development and outcomes of developing confidence (Sturges et al., 2003). The concept of cultural capital was captured by improved career status, dividing it into four dimensions of increased career opportunities, salary increases, management promotions and personal reputation (Baruch et al., 2005). The concept of social capital was defined as networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends and further discussed through the motivation, development and outcomes of creating and maintaining networks (Rader and Burt, 1996; Dickmann and Doherty, 2008).

Model 1: Analytical model of career capital



Source: models from QSR NVivo version 7.0

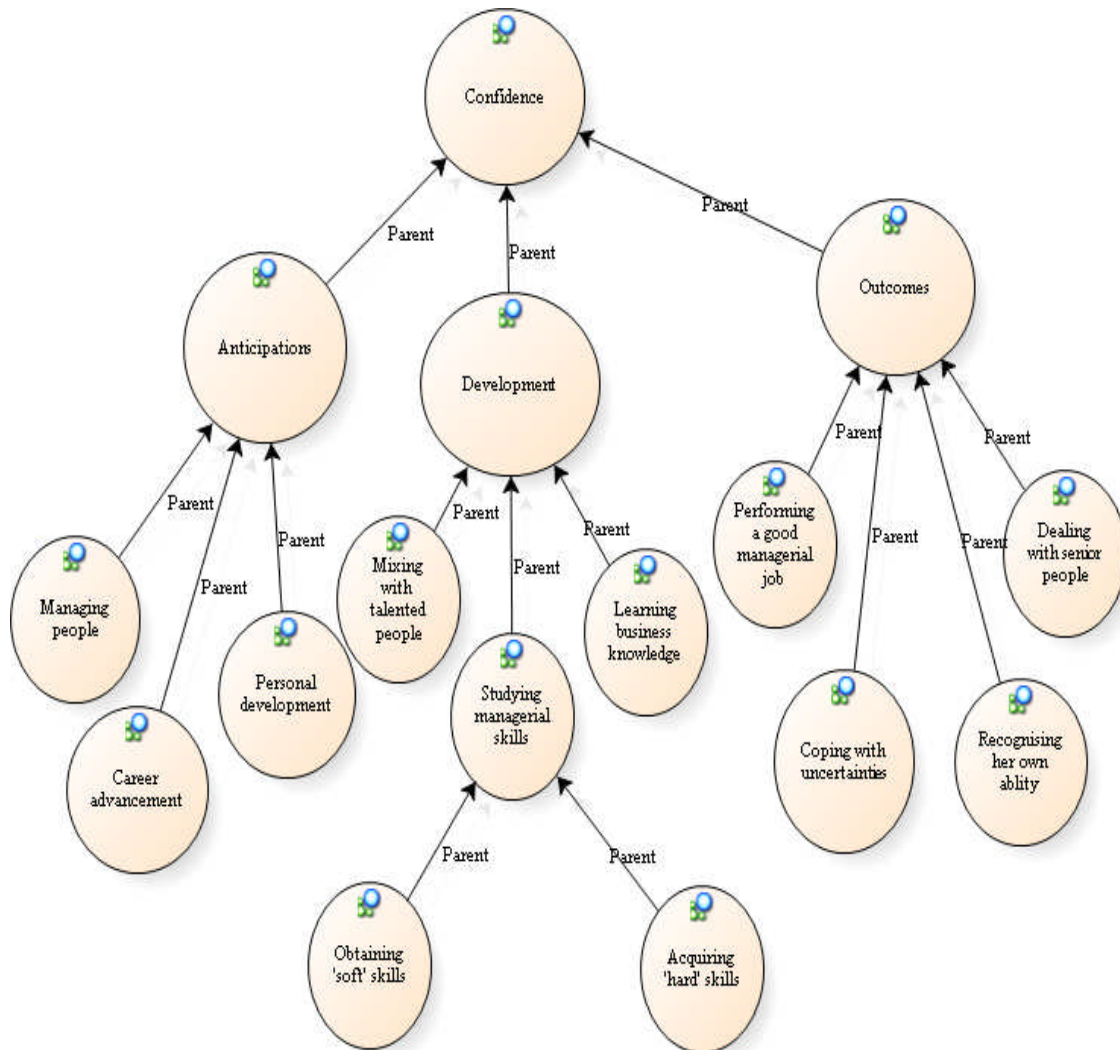
To gain a better overview for uncovering and explaining the range and nature of the research participants' responses, statements were chosen from their original transcripts and mapped on a number of flipcharts. Information about the age, managerial experience, family structure (i.e. married or single, with or without children, having or not having housemaids) and cultural background (British and Taiwanese) emerged

from qualitative interview data and occasionally from the conversations with alumni officers. These facilitated comparisons among the six business schools and between British and Taiwanese samples and the identification of similarities and differences in career benefits.

4.7.1 Coding the concept of human capital

The coding framework of interview data about the concept of human capital was guided by the literature of *knowing-how* and *knowing-why* competencies (DeFillippi and Arthur, 1994, 1996; Jones and Lichtenstein, 2000; Inkson and Arthur, 2001) and the recent empirical research on MBA graduates' career outcomes (Sturges et al., 2003; Simpson et al., 2004, 2005). There were three dimensions within the concept of human capital: knowledge, skills and confidence. Knowledge was taken to be new management ideas and cognitive business theories. Skills were taken to be 'hard' business and management techniques (e.g. financial analysis) and 'soft' people management skills (e.g. team-working skills, leadership styles and skills relating to better management of oneself). Confidence was defined as growth in confidence in women's career progression. In the pilot study of eight British women, three themes within the dimension of confidence had already emerged: anticipations of developing confidence, development of confidence and outcomes from developing confidence in career development. The tree nodes were presented as an analytical model (see below model 2) when analysing the dimension of confidence.

Model 2: Analytical model of the dimension of confidence



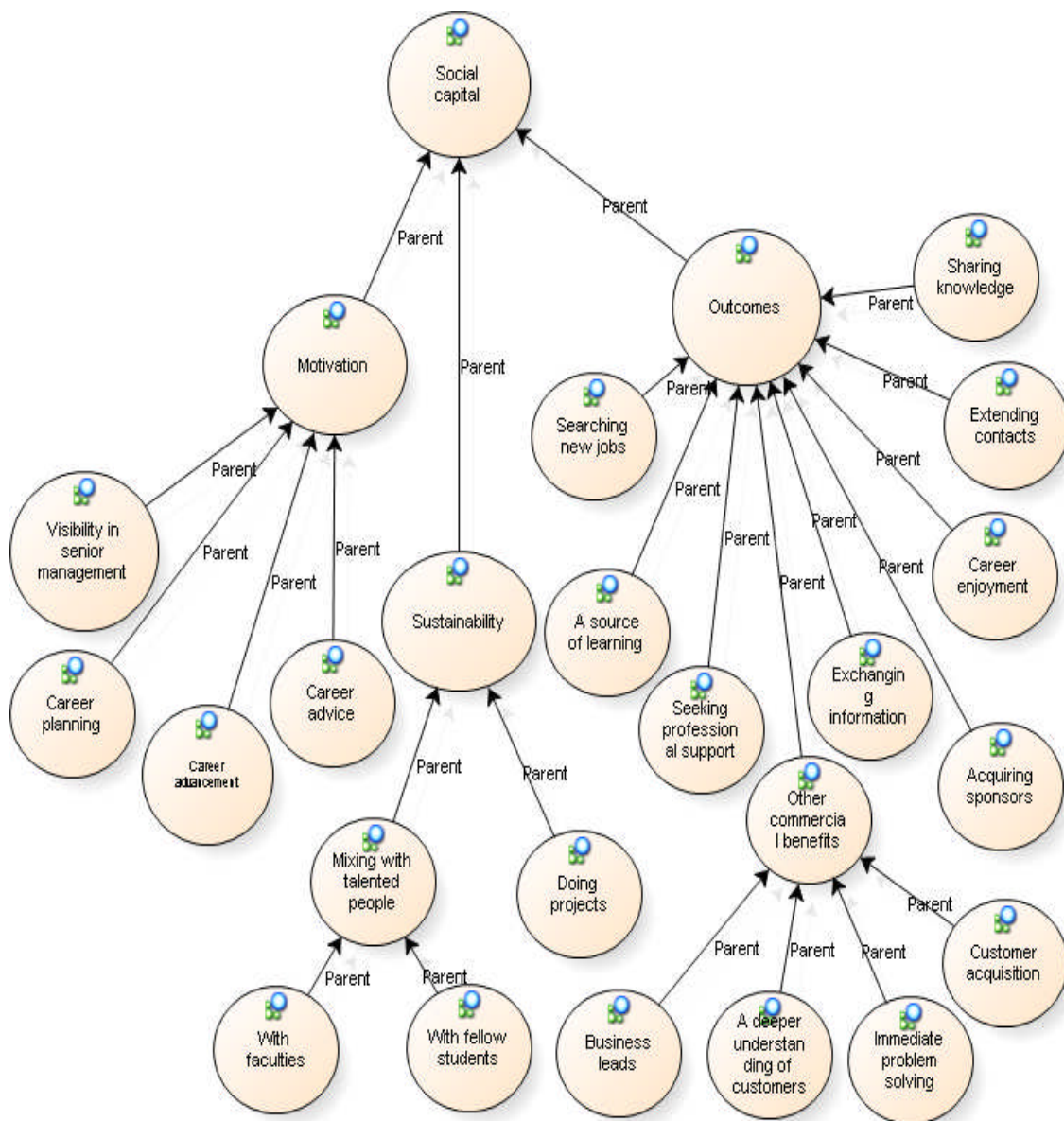
Source: models from QSR Nvivo version 7.0

4.7.2 Coding the concept of social capital

The coding framework of interview data about the concept of social capital was guided by the literature of *knowing-whom* competencies (Rader and Burt, 1996; Jones and DeFillippi, 1996) and the recent research on MBA graduates' career outcomes of networking (Sturges et al., 2003; Dickmann and Doherty, 2008). In this research, social capital was defined as the networks with peers, alumni, faculty and friends.

When analysing the data of Taiwanese sample, three themes within the dimension of networks emerged: motivation for creating networks, sustaining networks and outcomes from networking activities. The tree nodes were presented as an analytical model (see below model 3) when analysing the dimension of networks.

Model 3: Analytical model of the dimension of networks

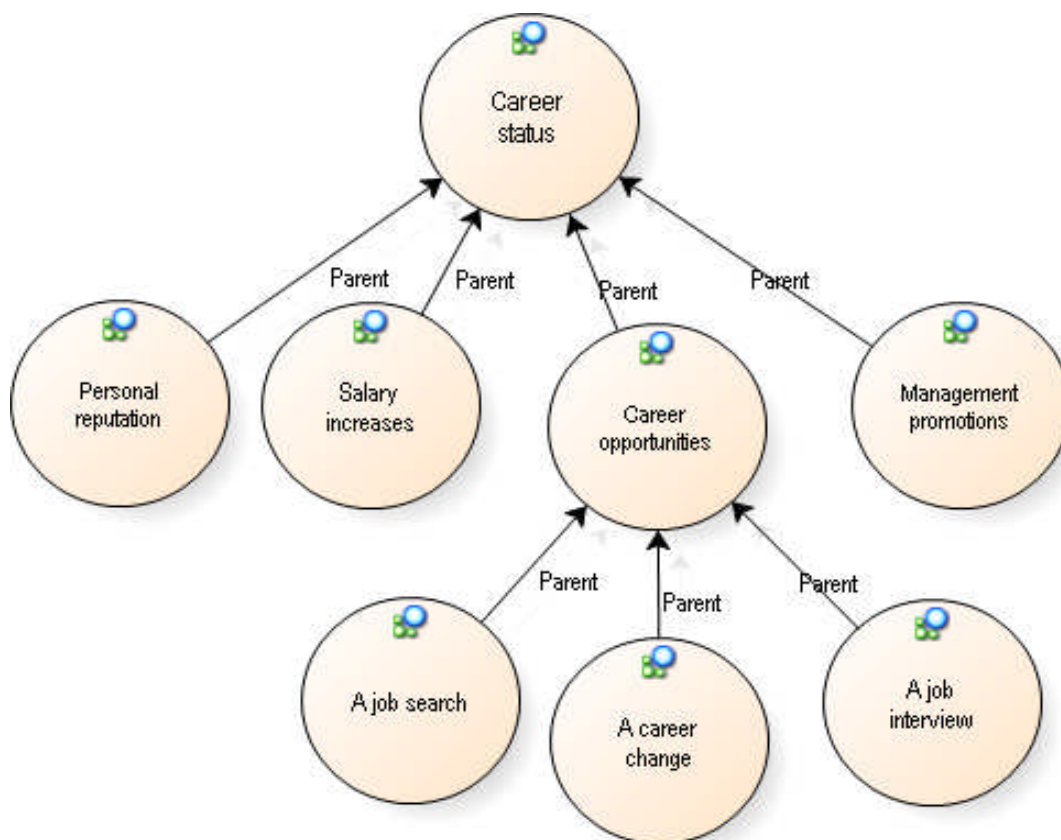


Source: models from QSR Nvivo version 7.0

4.7.3 Coding the concept of cultural capital

The coding framework of interview data about the concept of cultural capital was guided by the literature (Tajfel, 1981) and the recent research on MBA graduates' career outcomes (Baruch et al., 2005). The focus of examining cultural capital was on the improvement of career status which led to salary increases, management promotions, increased career opportunities (Sturges et al., 2003; Baruch et al., 2005) and personal reputation (Rader and Burt, 1996; Jones and DeFillippi, 1996; Baruch and Peiperl, 2000). The tree nodes were presented as an analytical model (see below model 4) when analysing improved career status.

Model 4: Analytical model of the dimension of career status



Source: models from QSR Nvivo version 7.0

4.8 Presenting the findings

The findings of this research will be presented in the next three chapters. Following the process of data analysis, the career benefits perceived by Taiwanese and British female participants are reported under the headings of human, social and cultural capital.

Chapter 5 will show an overview of the career benefits which both British and Taiwanese have reported. Women report the acquisition of career capital from the Executive MBA cohort and how the MBA help them to develop managerial careers.

Chapter 6 will focus on the acquisition of social capital in terms of networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends. The similarities and differences in career benefits among women from London Business School, National Sun Yat-sen University, National Cheng Chi University and the two older women from National Cheng Kung University will be discussed. The discussion will be held on the cultural factors (e.g. *Guanxi* and Confucianism) which have an impact on women's career benefits in the UK and Taiwan.

Chapter 7 will concentrate on the acquisition of human and cultural capital in terms of knowledge, skills, confidence and career status. The similarities and differences in career benefits among women from Cranfield School of Management, Cass Business School and the four younger women from National Cheng Kung University will be revealed. I will explain the latter in relationship to the individual characteristics of the respondents (age and managerial experience), together with the cultural context which influence women's career benefits in the UK and Taiwan.

**CHAPTER 5: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CAREER
BENEFITS FROM THE EXECUTIVE MBA**

Table 5: The female participants in this research

Participants	Business Schools*	Age	Managerial Status	Marital status and/or with children	Having housemaids
Yang	A	40	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Jessica	A	41	Senior manager	Married with 2 children	Having a housemaid
Cindy	A	42	Senior manager	Married with 2 children	Having a housemaid
Sylvia	A	42	Senior manager	Married with 2 children	Having a housemaid
Kong	A	44	Senior manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Lin	A	45	Senior manager	Married with 3 children	Having a housemaid
Sandra	B	38	Senior manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Jenny	B	39	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Shih Ning	B	39	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Karen	B	44	Senior manager	Married with 2 children	Having a housemaid
Hong	B	44	Senior manager	Married with 2 children	Having 2 housemaids
Nora	B	45	Senior manager	Married with 1 child	Having a housemaid
Ellen	C	35	Junior manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Jennifer	C	36	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Ping Ann	C	36	Middle manager	Married with 1 child	Having a housemaid
Ying	C	37	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Wang	C	45	Senior manager	Married with 2 children	Having a housemaid
Su Chang	C	45	Senior manager	Married with 3 children	Having a housemaid
Alex	D	35	Middle manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Kate	D	35	Senior manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Colette	D	39	Senior manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Sam	D	37	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Lesley	D	38	Senior manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Ali	D	36	Senior manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Dax	E	34	Senior manager	Married with 1 child	No housemaid
Melissa	E	35	Senior manager	Married with 1 child	Having a housemaid
Nerys	E	32	Middle manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Kirsty	E	34	Senior manager	Married with 1 child	No housemaid
Donna	E	34	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Wendy	E	38	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Clarissa	F	45	Middle manager	Married with 2 children	No housemaid
Jo	F	33	Middle manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Sarah	F	32	Junior manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Helen	F	32	Middle manager	Unmarried	No housemaid
Liz	F	34	Middle manager	Married, no children	No housemaid
Sue	F	32	Middle manager	Married, no children	No housemaid

* Business Schools: A – National Cheng Chi University; B – National Sun Yat-sen University;

C – National Cheng Kung University; D – London Business School; E- Cranfield School of Management

F – Cass Business School

CHAPER FIVE: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CAREER BENEFITS FROM THE EXECUTIVE MBA

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of the career benefits which both British and Taiwanese participants perceived, in terms of the acquisition of human, social and cultural capital, from studying an Executive MBA (EMBA) programme. Prior to reporting the career benefits, a brief description of both samples will help in gaining a better understanding of the female respondents who participated in the research.

Looking at the whole sample of this research (see table 5), the average age of the Taiwanese sample was 41 (age range between 35 and 45), 11 women taking senior roles in their companies (all the 11 women reached the senior management level prior to the EMBA). The average age of British sample was 35 (age range between 32 and 45), seven women in senior management positions (only one woman reached the senior level prior to the EMBA). In this research, Taiwanese women were older and more senior than British women. Of the 11 married women in the Taiwanese sample, ten women married and had children long before the EMBA and one woman met her husband in the EMBA cohort and married following graduation. Of the 11 married women in the British sample, five women married prior to the EMBA but only one of them had a child before the EMBA. Her extended family (i.e. mother and mother-in-law) lived with her. Another five women (having partners before the EMBA) chose to marry after graduation and one woman married her fellow EMBA classmate following the completion of the EMBA. In terms of domestic help, ten married women with children in the Taiwanese sample hired housemaids to share family duties, whereas only one British woman recruited a nanny to look after her son.

The ages of the six women from London Business School (average age 37, age range between 35 and 39) were all over 35. In terms of average ages, they were slight differences between the LBS women and those women from Cranfield School of Management (average age 34, age range between 32 and 38) and from Cass Business School (average age 35, age range between 32 and 45). However, the six LBS females studied for their bachelor's degrees at leading British universities and had achieved career success in terms of career status before the programme. Prior to the EMBA, one LBS woman was a senior manager and five were middle managers, whereas among those women from the Cranfield School of Management and the Cass Business School, eight females were junior managers and four were middle managers before the EMBA.

In terms of average age of the women from each business school in the Taiwanese sample, there were no differences (this was not surprising because Asian MBA students were generally found to embark on the programme at the ages between 35 and 40) among the three schools: National Cheng Chi University (42), National Sun Yat-sen University (41) and National Cheng Kung University (39). There were four women from the National Cheng Kung University whose ages were between 35 and 38, whereas the age range of the six women from the National Cheng Chi University was between 40 and 45 and the six women from the National Sun Yat-sen University were between 38 and 45. In terms of the managerial status before the EMBA, five women were senior managers and one was middle manager in the National Cheng Chi University's sample; four women were senior managers and two were middle managers in the National Sun Yat-sen University's sample; two women were senior managers, three were middle managers and one was junior manager in the National Cheng Kung University's sample.

Data analysis was conducted in the years of 2007 and 2008 and the ages given in table 5 are those of the participants in the year of 2008 in this thesis. The remainder of this chapter will present both the British and Taiwanese women's perceptions in general of the career benefits in terms of examining the concepts of human, cultural and social capital.

5.1 The acquisition of human capital

There are three dimensions of career benefits within the concept of human capital: confidence, knowledge and skills ('soft' and 'hard' skills). This section begins with women's perceptions on confidence and then moves on to explore the acquisition of knowledge and skills.

5.1.1 Confidence

Confidence was frequently perceived as a career benefit of the EMBA programme and valued by female participants (14 British women and four Taiwanese women) in this research. There were differences in career benefits in terms of how British and Taiwanese women revealed their anticipations and development of confidence, and outcomes from acquiring confidence in career development.

Anticipations of acquiring and increasing confidence

Female participants (12 British women and no Taiwanese women) reported that, before the EMBA, they needed confidence to make sure that they could perform a good managerial job and had the potential to be successful in their careers. Kirsty reported her anticipation of gaining confidence related to personal development.

“A main driver for doing the Executive MBA was that I was extremely frustrated at the amount of effort I was putting into work ... my career was progressing more slowly than other similar-level colleagues...One thing which was very important at that stage was personal development. I needed confidence.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

Prior to the EMBA programme, Kirsty did not enjoy her work as much as she expected. Having invested a lot of time and effort in the previous job, she still felt frustrated and was unhappy with her slow progress at work. Since the EMBA at the Cranfield School of Management much emphasized personal and professional development, Kirsty reckoned that she would gain inner strengths (e.g. confidence) from her personal development journey on the course.

Sue revealed why she needed confidence to run her own business in future years.

“Before the Executive MBA I was thinking seriously of starting my own business. I thought that the MBA programme probably could have helped and satisfied my requirements in terms of giving me skills and confidence which I would need to run my own business in future years.” (Sue, Cass - 32)

Before embarking upon the EMBA at the Cass Business School, Sue was thinking of changing her career direction. She wanted to start her own business and needed to learn different skills (e.g. entrepreneurial skills) which she did not use or need while working in a corporate environment. In her career advancement, confidence was seen as critical to enable her to set up the business and then operate it herself.

“I needed confidence to deal with people. There was a lot of politics in this company.” (Nerys, Cranfield – 32)

Nerys was frustrated with the politics in her company. Finding it hard to cope with difficult peers and supervisors, she looked forward to developing her confidence by learning ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ skills. The main focus of the EMBA course at Cranfield would be on people-management skills and leadership styles which Nerys wished to acquire at that stage of her career.

Unlike their British counterparts, none of the Taiwanese participants mentioned that the motivation for studying for an EMBA was to gain confidence. Nonetheless, two women talked about how they had acquired increased confidence from the EMBA.

“Before the MBA I was leading a team which had a few difficult people so I had gained confidence before. Completing the course helped me to increase confidence and to manage those people more effectively.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Having worked with difficult colleagues in a male-dominated company and helped and guided subordinates in her own department, Shih Ning did not feel that she lacked confidence in her previous working life. Nonetheless, she admitted that studying ‘soft’ people-management skills at the National Sun Yat-sen University helped her to improve confidence.

“Previously I did not lack confidence, but my confidence was developing on the programme. Maybe it was because we did an awful lot of cases and studied many new skills.” (Jennifer, Cheng Kung – 36)

Agreeing with Shih Ning, Jennifer had already acquired confidence in her past corporate life. However, she was glad to see that her confidence had developed by acquiring new business skills and studying various cases with fellow students. The EMBA learning experience helped the Taiwanese women to develop their confidence. This will be reported more fully in the following section.

How confidence was developed on the programme?

Female participants (11 British women and three Taiwanese women) reported that confidence was developed during the course which helped them to enhance career-relevant knowledge and job-related skills. Personal experience of developing confidence on the course was different for the individual participants. Donna from the Cranfield School of Management said:

“I had a great time on the Executive MBA. It gave me a lot of confidence to tackle things, for example by using business theory or new skills. Perhaps I wouldn’t have had such confidence before. Now I have got the confidence to do my job well.” (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

Finding her EMBA study enjoyable and valuable, Donna revealed that her confidence was gained during the course when she studied up-to-date business theory and new managerial skills. Working as an engineer in an automobile company, she had often

been viewed as a specialist before. Her confidence was developing when she studied general management and business skills in the classroom. This had enabled her to perform a good managerial job at workplace.

Shih Ning from National Sun Yat-sen University reported:

“I am an engineer... I did not know much about accounting and finance before. I enjoyed studying finance, which made me confident when I spoke to financial experts. My colleagues were surprised that I gained knowledge and confidence in that area.”
(Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Similar to the experience of Donna during the course at Cranfield, Shih Ning was a civil engineer by background and had particularly appreciated learning about financial theory and techniques. As a result, she was able to talk confidently to her colleagues about the subject of finance.

Making presentations in the EMBA classroom and conducting case studies helped British women to develop their confidence in front of a group of peers and faculty members.

“The second aspect of gaining confidence from the Executive MBA was that we had gone through all sorts of situations both at work and in the classroom. We had to do presentations and justify cases. Sometimes people in my class really challenged my argument. I have got a lot of practice in case studies and presentations.” (Wendy, Cranfield – 38)

Wendy appreciated learning opportunities created on the course which allowed her to express herself in business case studies and to defend her argument in the classroom presentations. In particular, conducting cases gave her a lot of invaluable training as to how to combine theory and practice. She gained her confidence throughout undertaking those case studies and presentations during the programme.

“My previous job did not require me to do any presentations. Preparing for the presentation on a PowerPoint file and practicing lines within the learning group gave me confidence.” (Helen, Cass – 32)

Being a junior manager in the company before, Helen did not need to make presentations to business customers and peers prior to embarking on the EMBA programme. However, during the course, everyone was required to prepare at least one presentation by using PowerPoint skills. There was an opportunity to rehearse in

front of everyone's learning group. Her confidence was gaining and developing from preparations, rehearsals and actual presentations in her cohort.

"In the classroom, I had to do many presentations. Again in my financial world, I don't usually have to do so many presentations, unlike a sales person who often needs to present things to business customers. Each module you needed to do a presentation, explaining what you did. I recall my first presentation; I was terrified. And now that is the thing that has added to my confidence and learning experience." (Melissa, Cranfield – 35)

Previously Melissa rarely needed to make presentations at work since her role as a financial manager did not involve with external customers. Having experienced her first terrifying classroom pitch, Melissa felt it useful to have many presentations' practice during the EMBA programme. This had enabled her to acquire presentational skills and improve her confidence.

Learning alongside talented people helped British women to develop confidence when they faced challenges during and after the programme.

"In my class I met people who had an engineering background, or an accounting background, or a financial management background. I was able to ask for help when I did my coursework in a particular area which I did not know. I felt confident that I could produce a nice piece of work after consulting my classmates. Knowing those people would also be useful after the Executive MBA." (Sarah, Cass – 32)

Jennifer from National Cheng Kung University concurred:

"When we did case studies, I could always find someone in my study group who was able to offer guidance in a certain area where I lacked confidence." (Jennifer, Cheng Kung – 36)

Students in the British and Taiwanese EMBA cohorts came from different educational and professional backgrounds. Seeking professional guidance from peers created an opportunity for everyone to study managerial skills and to acquire business knowledge. Jennifer valued the experience of conducting cases and seeking help from talented people, which gave her confidence and useful knowledge to tackle problems on the course.

Outcomes of developing confidence

Confidence which resulted from completing an EMBA appeared to have had an impact on the women's managerial careers, showing women's ability to be effective in the workplace, leading to dealing better with people (particularly senior people), gaining increased respect and coping with change and uncertainty. Female participants (14 British women and five Taiwanese women) revealed the outcomes of developing confidence.

British participants regarded confidence as a career benefit from taking the degree in terms of dealing with people at work.

"I am able to direct others by sharing understanding and explaining expectations. I can liaise with contacts to make the best use of different talents and expert knowledge which gives me confidence." (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

Having completed the EMBA course, Kirsty reported that she was able to work with peers and supervisors in an effective way in terms of sharing understanding with peers and supervisors and articulating clearly job expectations to subordinates. Studying for an EMBA offered her with confidence to analyse and comprehend the talents of her subordinates and use sufficiently their expert knowledge at work.

In particular, the British women felt that gaining confidence helped them to deal with senior people at work.

"Having confidence means I can sit in the meeting with the MDs in business. I am able to deal with those people easily now – that's a big benefit to me honestly." (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

Explaining why acquiring confidence was very important in her career, Clarissa identified that she was comfortable to hold meetings with senior business people (managing directors). She benefited from the acquisition of confidence as a result of studying for an EMBA.

"I think that the MBA helped me to improve my confidence when I spoke to senior people in this industry (financial services). Previously I didn't imagine that I would have sat with those senior people and talked about business." (Melissa, Cranfield - 35)

“In terms of confidence, I think that the challenge which the EMBA gave me has enabled me to think better on my feet. When challenged in the workplace, I am able to give intellectual consideration before delivering a response. Before I would have felt more pressured especially by people more senior than me.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

Feeling stressed by senior people’s challenges in terms of technical work issues before, both Melissa and Kirsty cherished the confidence which they developed from studying the EMBA programme. In particular, Kirsty felt that she would be able to think about the answer first and then to deliver it when she was challenged again at work. She felt more relaxed and was able to speak up when facing senior managers.

“Doing the MBA gave me confidence in my abilities. When my boss has a go at me, it does not reduce me to tears.” (Ali, LBS – 36)

Ali reported that the confidence which she acquired from taking the EMBA empowered her to take criticism from her boss without reducing her to tears. This meant that gaining confidence helped women to overcome their psychological weaknesses.

A Taiwanese woman agreed with this point:

“I think that gaining increased confidence is a benefit to my career. Now I feel more confident in business meetings and know how to deal with senior people.” (Ellen, Cheng Kung -35)

As a young junior manager in a large Taiwanese company, Ellen had previously acquired confidence to work with male colleagues, but studying for an EMBA helped her to develop confidence when she attended business meetings with senior managers.

Gaining confidence empowered British women to contribute their ideas more freely in meetings, made them more assertive, and able to deal with challenges better. Clarissa from Cass Business School reported on her experience of redundancy:

“Studying the Executive MBA did give me confidence to identify what the next move could be. Unlike the first time I was made redundant, the second time there was no obvious place to walk into. So I chased down my networks, went to see lots of people, and set myself up as a media consultant.” (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

Having acquired job-relevant skills and confidence from studying the EMBA, Clarissa was not afraid of being redundant for the second time in her working life. Using her professional and personal networks, she was confident when facing challenges of becoming an independent media consultant since there were no job opportunities in her former professional area when she was made redundant.

Confidence which resulted from completing the EMBA enabled female graduates to recognise their own confidence and to earn more respect in their work organisations.

“I am now in the senior management. I also found increased respect in my company. This might be linked to my achievements at the workplace and the reputation I have created over the years or just my increased confidence.” (Wendy, Cranfield – 38)

Being proud of taking a senior role in her company upon graduation, Wendy perceived increased respect from her peers and supervisors. She revealed that the respect related to gaining improved confidence leading to her increased reputation as a manager.

“The main benefit of the EMBA is that I develop more confidence and it helps me to feel that I ‘deserve’ to be in a senior position.” (Kate, LBS – 35)

Kate felt confident in taking a senior role in her company and attributed this to her increased confidence which was gained as a result of taking the EMBA programme. She stressed that she was deserved to take this role.

“When I first came here (Kaohsiung MRT Company), I was facing men who were 20 years older than me. They had spent almost their whole working life in China Steel. These men didn’t use a friendly, diplomatic way to communicate with people. At the beginning it was too hard to communicate with these male colleagues. I was 35 years old and they were 55. I feel that the EMBA helped and the time spent in this company has given me confidence to work with them. Now these colleagues can accept my suggestions and ideas. I wouldn’t imagine that they could have accepted these before.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

Shih Ning perceived that male bias was prevalent in her work organization. Male colleagues were much older than her and they treated her arrogantly. Studying for an EMBA programme not only equipped her with confidence, but also reinforced her belief that she was a credible manager. As a result, her male colleagues recognized her ability as a good manager.

5.1.2 Knowledge

The acquisition of knowledge was revealed by female participants (four British women and five Taiwanese women). In this research, knowledge was taken to be new management ideas and cognitive business theories.

British participants reported that they had benefited from learning new management issues and cognitive theory in the EMBA cohort. The broad know-how which female graduates gained from taking the EMBA programme could easily apply to their work in a variety of corporate contexts.

Donna reported the acquisition of knowledge:

“Obviously I understand that a certain amount of theory you will never use. At least you know it’s there. If you want to use it you can get it. I am using my EMBA theory a lot now more than my engineering theory.” (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

The EMBA programme aimed to teach a wide variety of business theories. It was likely that some theories might not be useful to every student. Donna valued the acquisition of knowledge in terms of studying different business and management theories and felt that she used them more than her own subject knowledge in engineering.

Clarissa from the Cass Business School said:

“I very much thought about my career progression but also something intellectually that I wanted to do because the last Master’s I have done was in 1984. That was my MA. I have never done any formal study since then so it was quite a shock going back to study management theories, sit exams, write a dissertation and do proper references.” (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

Studying for an EMBA programme in her mid-career enabled Clarissa to take up intellectual challenges again. She described the whole EMBA process as a “shock” to her since she had not studied for some years.

The Taiwanese participants echoed the theme of the acquisition of knowledge from taking the EMBA degree and, in particular, the middle managers aged between 35 and 40.

“I have learnt knowledge which I didn’t have before, for example financial management. I can now use accurate terms and jargon to explain to my colleagues. I am more confident than before because I understand and am able to use the technical terms in a sensible way.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

Jenny reported that she studied financial management and learnt financial terms and/or jargon. Using the appropriate language made her feel confident when speaking to her colleagues at work.

“Previously I was far too busy to pick up a book and read it. To concentrate on my (EMBA) study, I forced myself to read widely at weekends. I left university a long time ago. To my surprise, there have been so many new business theories emerging since I left the university.” (Ping Ann, Cheng Kung -36)

Supporting Jenny’s statement on acquiring knowledge, Ping Ann revealed that she did not have time to learn new business and management theories from books before taking the EMBA programme. Choosing to study for a business and management programme offered her an opportunity to sit down and read. She valued the knowledge which she acquired from studying new business theories.

Jessica from National Cheng Chi University, who was a senior manager, reported:

“Having said before, I left school 18 years ago. It was time to go back and update knowledge although my company had offered me short-course training opportunities before...I am glad that I have learnt new business ideas. I have studied some new business models and management theory on the course.” (Jessica, Cheng Chi - 41)

In general, companies invest a lot of money in senior staff and let them further develop their human capital throughout in-company training and international seminars and workshops. As a senior manager, Jessica benefited from studying new business models and management theories from taking an EMBA beyond other learning opportunities in her company.

5.1.3 Skills

In this research, skills were taken to be ‘hard’ business and management techniques (e.g. financial analysis) and ‘soft’ people-management skills (e.g. team-working skills, leadership styles and skills relating to better management of oneself).

The participants (eight British women and four Taiwanese women) reported that they had gained financial management skills from the programme. The most useful skills, which British graduates thought that they had acquired from the EMBA, were those that related to the understanding and analysis of financial issues.

“I think that I have increased understanding of financial management skills.” (Melissa, Cranfield – 35)

“I’ve studied skills of financial analysis and management. Before (the EMBA), I heard that they would teach us those skills which I lacked.” (Liz, Cass – 34)

“Skills - management finance, it helps me to understand how different costs come together and how it affects the bottom line and what really matters.” (Sue, Cass - 32)

The acquisition of financial management skills was agreed by Taiwanese women.

“I needed skills of financial management. The EMBA taught us much about finance. I spent much time in learning this subject.” (Ying, Cheng Kung – 37)

Investment skills were acquired as a result of completing the EMBA programme.

“Now I can talk about investment skills. In a way I can use a language these guys understand so I guess that gives me confidence too.” (Nerys, Cranfield – 32)

The participants mentioned marketing skills (three British women) which were also important business skills to help female graduates to advance their managerial careers.

“My marketing skills became much more improved. I was constantly approached for a director’s job which I didn’t want. A company like XXXX and so on would approach me for a marketing director position because I had completed the MBA degree in Cass.” (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

“The MBA helped me to get the experience of my career change. The MBA gave me a wider perspective about company operations. I enjoyed studying marketing and gaining different skills.” (Dax, Cranfield – 34)

“Beyond financial analysis, marketing skills are useful.” (Helen, Cass – 32)

The British women acknowledged that they had learnt other skills as a result of completing the EMBA, for example research skills.

“I can undertake myself research projects now because they showed us how to search literature, analyse data and do references and so on.” (Sarah, Cass – 32)

“The MBA has also improved my research skills.” (Wendy, Cranfield – 38)

Sarah was one of the youngest women in the EMBA cohort from Cass Business School. She reported that she had benefited from learning research skills which helped her to submit good-quality reports with proper references after conducting a research project. Wendy from the Cranfield School of Management agreed with Sarah that the course had helped her to improve the research skills.

The British women acknowledged that they valued the experience of making business presentations frequently in the Executive MBA classroom which involved with making slides from PowerPoint software.

“The other thing which really came out was presentation skills. I am now Miss PowerPoint Queen here. I just ended up doing all my presentations in PowerPoint files in the classroom.” (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

“I had never made a PowerPoint presentation before. The first time I used that computer software was in the EMBA classroom.” (Melissa, Cranfield – 35)

The participants did not want to be restricted to a narrow and specialist role. They were interested in taking the degree which gave them a wider business background.

“I was regarded as a specialist before. I can say that I am a generalist now. I will feel more confident to enter a job-interview room and tell the panel that I know new business theories and can read financial reports.” (Ping Ann, Cheng Kung - 36)

The acquisition of ‘soft’ skills was frequently perceived as a career benefit which the graduates had gained on the EMBA, for example people-management skills. The participants (12 British women and five Taiwanese women) believed that the EMBA had helped them to improve the ‘soft’ skills which they needed to manage people at work.

“For my personal interest levels I was keen to learn ‘soft’ skills. I wanted to learn more about how people interact and how to work effectively with people.” (Jo, Cass – 33)

“I think the ‘soft’ skills which I have learnt from the MBA are useful for me to analyse some of the politics that go on in the company.” (Melissa, Cranfield – 35)

In terms of communication skills, Kirsty reported:

“I think that I have improved communication skills. I can identify different working styles and how to manage them. I am able to analyse team dynamics as well.” (Kirsty, Cranfield - 34)

“I can better communicate with my supervisor and colleagues now.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Jenny supported Kirsty’s statement that her communicational skills had been enhanced since she studied ‘soft’ skills which focused on understanding and managing people at the workplace.

It is important to note that the improved skills of managing relationships with peers, supervisors and colleagues were often mentioned by the British and Taiwanese participants. This sometimes spilled over to relationships outside of work, in particular, for those married women with children.

“Actually the real great thing that the MBA gave me, which maybe not many people would say to you, is to have a better relationship with my own daughter. She is now extremely confident. She really understands how people work whereas I had no idea previously because I had only technical ability and knowledge. The MBA taught me how to deal with people and to understand how people work. The MBA gave me greater confidence in this aspect.” (Dax, Cranfield – 34)

“I think it’s a useful course in many aspects of life as really business is about managing relationships with people. This extends to my friends and family.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

“I have three boys. They often tease me that I don’t know how to use an MP3 and etc because I am totally dedicated to my work five days a week. Studying for an EMBA offered me with time and space to think and comprehend how relationships with colleagues, friends and family work.” (Lin, Cheng Chi – 45)

Team-working skills were perceived by the participants as having been acquired on the EMBA course. This was often attributed to the emphasis on group activities on the programme.

“I was impressed by the use of team-working as a development tool when I was on the course.” (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

“It was a lot more about teamwork in the EMBA. You understand more about people, how to interrelate with those people and how to motivate people.” (Sarah, Cass – 32)

Other career benefits

There are other career benefits beyond the acquisition of knowledge, skills and confidence. Personal satisfaction varied from individual to individual, but came from finding work more enjoyable and appreciating a more manageable work-life balance. The participants reported:

“The intangible benefits really come down things like my job satisfaction and self-esteem. I really enjoy this job and am willing to contribute more to the company than before.” (Sue, Cass – 32)

“Benefits – I am more personally satisfied and less stressed. Now I have a greater perspective and try to see where other colleagues are coming from.” (Kirsty, Cranfield -34)

“Being a female manager, I am more satisfied and am willing to take challenges and can make better decisions.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

The participants reported having a better work-life balance as a result of completing the EMBA programme.

“I am actually comfortable having a nice life-work balance. I am not sure that I want to work stupid hours every day and sacrifice my personal life for that like before. I definitely have a big life-work ethic. That is why I wanted to move to a place near home.” (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

“Work-life balance – this is definitely one of the biggest pros that my position here offers and I do believe that there are not many in my kind of job who can say that” (Ali, LBS -36)

The participants revealed that they had greater awareness and ability to be effective because they were increasingly aware of what they wanted from their careers. As a result, they were able to work more effectively in their work organisations than before.

“I should say the general awareness which I got from the EMBA. The people development thing is enormous for me. I really understand now how I can be more effective. That was really a big thing for me – being able to unblock situations and move them forward positively.” (Wendy, Cranfield – 38)

Valuing the experience of studying people development and management issues, Wendy felt that she had greater awareness of her own ability and of how to work more effectively by analyzing difficult situations, solving problems and making fast progress.

“I think that I have increased awareness about my career...I have increased understanding of different business areas leading to improved credibility.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

Similar to Wendy’s statement, Kirsty agreed that she acquired increased awareness. Understanding the business areas in a deeper way helped her to make faster progress at work.

The increased awareness of possible career paths was revealed by both British and Taiwanese participants.

“My ideal career path from this point now would be to become the corporate compliance officer some time within the next two or three years, which is a vice president or senior president position.” (Liz, Cass – 34)

“I am pretty confident to say that I aim to take on an executive role. At the moment this is likely to be head of CR, which is my boss’s job.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

“I am having a number of career options. The Executive MBA asked us to think about the possible career paths... I have gained a better picture of what I will be doing next few years.” (Ying, Cheng Kung – 37)

No matter whether those students had thought about their career paths before, the EMBA programme encouraged them to make a plan and forge possible future paths in their professional and managerial careers. Both Kirsty and Sarah had gained a clear picture of what they would be in their organisations in future years. Ying had identified her career options although she did not indicate a specific senior position.

5.1.4 Summary

The acquisition of human capital, in terms of acquiring career-relevant skills, job-related knowledge and confidence, was perceived as an important career benefit enjoyed by the female graduates. Tables six and seven summarized the career benefits gained by both the British and Taiwanese women. The female participants from the Cranfield School of Management, the Cass Business School and National Cheng Kung University (younger women in the sample) have largely reported the acquisition of business and management knowledge, ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ skills as well as growth in confidence. In particular, younger women (aged between 32 and 38) concentrated on revealing their motivation for acquiring confidence, how it was developed on the programme and career outcomes from developing confidence, in terms of dealing with senior people, gaining more respect at work, coping with change and uncertainty and being able to be more effective as a manager. Moreover, personal satisfaction, awareness in business areas and likely career paths were also seen as career benefits from EMBA studies.

5.2 The acquisition of cultural capital

The focus in examining cultural capital was on the improvement of career status which led to salary increases, management promotions, increased career opportunities and personal reputation.

5.2.1 Improved career status

The EMBA qualification helped the women to improve career status and achieve career success. In a broad way, an EMBA degree was seen as a “passport” to senior roles and every woman was able to gain the passport upon graduation. Others spoke about how the EMBA helped them to “fast track” managerial careers as a “ticket” or a “stamp” and, in one instance it was regarded as the “cream” on the cake which showed that the female had really enhanced her managerial career.

Clarissa from the Cass Business School revealed:

“In a way what I got out from the MBA is holding an MBA from that business school (Cass) gives me a kind of informal ‘passport’ so directors of senior organisations would speak to me.” (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

Clarissa regarded the EMBA degree as a “passport” – an interesting metaphor as a passport which grants the person permission to travel anywhere in the world. A passport is also an important means of identification, so comparing an EMBA to a passport suggests that the EMBA immediately identifies you as a person with the right credentials.

Nerys from the Cranfield School of Management reported:

“I wanted to get into that good place (post of vice president in JP Morgan). I thought that the EMBA would be a ticket for me to do that.” (Nerys, Cranfield – 32)

Nerys had a strong ambition to acquire the job of vice president in her company. She considered her EMBA study as important as a “ticket” which would take her to senior management positions. The qualification was seen as a valid “ticket” to get there; as long as she acquired it, it would take her to the destination of career success.

Sam from the London Business School said:

“The companies wanted to see the MBA ‘stamp’ on my CV because it would show what I could do and what I could bring to the company and whether I could be moving around in different countries and whether I could cope with different cultures and diversities.” (Sam, LBS – 37)

Describing the degree as a “stamp” which put an imprinted mark on her CV, everyone would be reassured that Sam had equipped herself with managerial skills and business knowledge. Since the EMBA degree was globally recognized, the “stamp” validated what Sam could do as a manager. It was important to note that graduates from the London Business School needed to master a second language other than English.

Melissa from Cranfield School of Management revealed:

“If your CV has an MBA, from a financial perspective, people will be interested in your background not just as a finance person... The MBA is like the ‘cream’ on the cake – it’s nice to show people something which you have learnt.” (Melissa, Cranfield – 35)

Melissa felt that an EMBA degree added value to her CV and hence she viewed the EMBA qualification as the “cream” (or icing) on the cake to enhance its flavor and to make it more attractive. All these metaphors have shaped an understanding of women’s perceptions and definitions of career benefits.

“Acquiring the degree is a status thing. Now I feel more satisfied at work and am willing to contribute more to my company.” (Sandra, Sun Yat-sen - 38)

“One of my objectives of studying the EMBA was to improve my status and knowledge in the business and management field. I am glad that I have gained those things and can use them now.” (Nora, Sun Yat-sen - 45)

The Taiwanese participants did not use metaphors in the interviews, but they appreciated the symbolic value of the EMBA degree adding to their CVs. They perceived the power of the degree which helped them to improve career status and demonstrated that they had acquired managerial skills and had achieved a high level of competence.

Salary increases

The British participants (ten British women) talked happily about the increased salary which was one of the tangible career benefits from completing the programme. It fulfilled the needs of women’s career prospects and proved the value of the EMBA.

“My salary increase was about 120 per cent. I remember someone told me how much the fees at LBS would be when I first met some LBS people. It was more than my first mortgage, substantially more than that... When I looked at the Financial Times for the MBA students at the LBS after three years, the average of salary growth worked out something like 110 per cent. I think I was the lowest-paid person in my class to start with. The return of 120 per cent for working in BT was very high.” (Lesley, LBS – 38)

Lesley reported that the biggest career benefit she perceived from studying the EMBA was her salary increase. The fees for studying a business degree at London Business School were expensive (higher than all other business schools in the UK) so students would have to take financial risks. Not earning more than her fellow students in the cohort before the course, Lesley had learnt from the Financial Times that she would be likely to acquire a much better paid job after studying an EMBA at the London Business School. She had achieved her goal and was content with her well paid job in BT.

“My pay was increased when I was promoted to this job, the corporate responsibility assurance manager. The company paid my relocation package when I moved here (Bristol) from Nottingham. I am now in senior management.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

“Tangibly, in terms of the benefits, it is money – they increased my salary a lot. I am earning twice as much now as I was when I finished the EMBA so that was a big benefit to me.” (Sam, LBS - 35)

“The EMBA made a difference for my salary in this new company. My salary went up by about 50 per cent when I joined the company so the EMBA did make a big difference.” (Alex, LBS – 35)

“I got a £500 bonus and a bunch of flowers from my company when I graduated. I think money (salary) is very difficult to measure directly. I switched jobs when I finished the EMBA to take on Customer Service and Distribution, and I got an 18% pay rise.” (Ali, LBS -36)

Ali was a vice president of marketing and new product development in XXXX when she was interviewed. Her company sponsored the EMBA and she did not leave the company following the completion of the programme. Admitting that she was thrilled to receive flowers and a bonus when she finished her programme, she was satisfied with her salary growth after changing jobs within the company.

It was interesting to note that the Taiwanese participants reported that they did not immediately get salary increases, and this typifies EMBA graduates in other Taiwanese business schools. They also indicated that they did not gain financial support from their employers to take the programme as other EMBA students encountered. Apart from a few women, other female participants did not even mention financial rewards in the interviews.

“My company hasn’t supported anybody for taking a post-graduate degree in management. I paid the full fee of my EMBA course. As far as I know, all these women on the list (the list offered by National Sun Yat-sen University alumni office on the desk) were not sponsored by their companies. My pay remains unchanged.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

“I have yet to experience any significant pay increases. My salary is increasing every few years, but it has nothing to do with gaining the degree. I wasn’t sponsored by my company to take the course.” (Ping Ann, Cheng Kung - 36)

Clearly, financial rewards were not seen as a crucial part of Taiwanese women's conceptions of career success. There were differences between British and Taiwanese women in terms of how they perceived external career success (pay). Many British women were sponsored by their employers, whereas this was rare in Taiwan.

Management promotions

The British participants (12 British women) reported management promotions following the completion of the EMBA. They admitted that the promotions related to the improved career status which also enabled them to become influential decision-makers in their work organizations.

"The career benefits are totally measurable actually. Since finishing the MBA I have had three promotions which I wouldn't have without doing the MBA." (Sue, Cass – 32)

"Well, the obvious benefit was that I did get promoted six months after the course was finished. From a personal level, that was obviously great. That (promotion) meant a lot to me. It was a status thing." (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

"I got married after completing my MBA. I had a baby son in 2005. I took a year's maternity leave. When I came back I was successful in applying for a new role based in corporate affairs head office. It is a role of corporate responsibility assurance manager ... Without the MBA, I wouldn't have had a chance to be promoted and become an important member of the company." (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

All these three British women were thrilled when they were promoted to the higher management level after the EMBA. Even though Kirsty took a year off following childbirth, she still acquired a new managerial job in the same company. Kirsty considered that it was unlikely to have happened if she had not studied for an EMBA.

The Taiwanese participants did not discuss salary or promotions in the interviews; perhaps these factors were not their main reasons for taking the programme. Many of them had been promoted to senior levels prior to the EMBA programme and had acquired good salary packages. Sandra reported:

"I funded the EMBA myself. My company appreciated my decision to take the degree. They granted a lot of leave to me so I could focus on my study. I can't ask them to give me more money or a higher managerial job because of getting the degree but I am sure I will benefit from it in different ways." (Sandra, Sun Yat-sen – 38)

Sandra was grateful for the appreciation and support offered by her company when she pursued her EMBA study, although the company did not sponsor the programme. External career success (i.e. pay or promotion) was not viewed as important to Taiwanese women; other internal criteria for career success might be more critical to Taiwanese women at the stage of their mid-career transition.

Increased career opportunities

The EMBA qualification on British women's CVs helped them to gain entry into job interviews.

"I wouldn't have had the interview if I didn't have the MBA – as simple as that." (Jo, Cass – 33)

"The man I now work with has an MBA from LBS. The girl next door has one from Columbia. They knew my EMBA and helped me get the (job) interview. Then I got the job on my merits from (the EMBA)." (Nerys, Cranfield – 32)

"I mean, obviously, holding an EMBA is good at selling future (career future) on the CV, which helps me to get the new job. It is great." (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

Holding an EMBA degree helped the British women to make a career change and keep climbing the career status ladder. Donna felt that gaining the EMBA degree and writing it down on her CV would help her to acquire new, challenging jobs.

"The MBA definitely helped me to have a career change as I said before. It also helped me to progress up the career ladder." (Sarah, Cass – 32)

"When I was finishing the MBA I was still working within the IT (department) but sort of same area. Then I went back to account management within the IT department. From there I had gone into corporate assets and management which was a completely different career change." (Sue, Cass – 32)

The Taiwanese women anticipated that they would benefit from the improved career status from taking the degree. They did not expect immediate career benefits from acquiring the improved career status, but the EMBA would open doors in future.

"I am always pigeonholed as an architect or an urban designer. It is such a narrow and specialised job. I felt that the Executive MBA degree would help me to change a job or a career after six years. I will be proud to tell people that I have an Executive

MBA degree when I go to job interviews. I am not a narrow specialist any more.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

“In terms of career benefits, I have taken the EMBA and gained a degree which is widely recognized. The door is open to me where my career will be fast tracked in my organisation. Studying the MBA tells me that I will be able to work in different sectors.” (Ellen, Cheng Kung -35)

Donna of Cranfield School of Management had her view similar to the Taiwanese women.

“It is one thing which the MBA gave me more (career) options from my perspective.” (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

Personal reputation

The reputation of the business school was very important to working managers when they chose where to study an EMBA. Everyone in this research revealed that they selected the schools on a basis of the quality of the programme and how the EMBA would help them to manage and develop managerial careers. The reputation rubbed off on the students.

“The reason why I chose Cranfield was: 1) they had a good quality of Executive MBA course; 2) I wanted a university with a decent reputation... Many people in this building (Rolls-Royce) know that I got an MBA in Cranfield.” (Wendy, Cranfield – 38)

“I was proud to tell people that I did an MBA in National Cheng Chi University. It’s a reputable school in terms of its business and management courses. That was why I chose it.” (Kong, Cheng Chi – 44)

A decent, solid degree from a reputable business school was globally recognized and widely accepted by employers. The participants (16 British women and 15 Taiwanese women) reported:

“The business school which I attended has an international reputation. I am glad that I chose the right school in which to study... Now I can tell my colleagues in a confident way that I know accounting and HR management. I have done my Executive MBA in National Sun Yat-sen University. My colleagues are envious that I have acquired a degree from that business school.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

“The company agreed to sponsor the EMBA so I applied to LBS. I chose this business school because I did my research and decided to go there in order to get a good MBA, which was one of the best in the world.” (Alex, LBS – 35)

The aim of selecting a top business school was to gain recognition from potential employers, who were willing to pay a premium for British graduates from leading business schools. In the eyes of employers there is no substitute for the EMBA programmes run by top business schools. That was why Alex decided to choose London Business School to study her degree.

“The aim of taking the EMBA was to update my knowledge. I realised that networking was useful and it would help me get a better paid job. I chose Cheng Chi because it was a reputable business school and employers in Taipei recognised the degree offered by this school.” (Yang, Cheng Chi - 40)

Choosing a prestigious business school was equally important to Taiwanese women although some of them had moved into senior management positions prior to the EMBA. Yang revealed that the employers in the Taipei area recognised the value of the degree offered by a leading business school because they understood that the graduates possessed a high level of ability and were capable of taking leading roles at workplace.

5.2.2 Summary

The acquisition of cultural capital, in terms of improved career status, was seen as an important career benefit to junior and middle managers in this research. Tables six and seven showed that female participants from the six business schools reported improved career status. The EMBA qualification was globally recognized and widely accepted by employers. Salary increases, management positions, increased career opportunities and personal reputation were perceived as career benefits by British women. Taiwanese women enjoyed the personal reputation from acquiring an EMBA from a prestigious business school and anticipated increased career opportunities in their career development. None of them spoke about immediate salary increases and management promotions gained from studying the EMBA.

5.3 The acquisition of social capital

The focus of examining social capital is on the acquisition of networks, including the networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends. The following section shows the motivation for creating networks, sustainability of networks and outcomes from networking activities.

5.3.1 Motivation for creating networks

The participants (twelve Taiwanese women and one British woman) reported that the motivation for establishing networks was to seek career advancement and to gain visibility in senior management. Prior to the EMBA, the Taiwanese women had perceived that the potential benefits of networks included formal and informal information exchange on career planning and friendship.

“I wished to find out more information on new jobs through fellow students in my cohort. I was not sure how much those people could help me, but I felt that I would make some new friends and benefit from knowing them.” (Kong, Cheng Chi - 44)

Kong was seriously thinking of a job change before the EMBA. The fellow students in her cohort came from different business backgrounds and from various industries. Anticipating useful information about likely managerial jobs, she believed that she would benefit from making new friends and acquiring shared job information.

“Prior to the programme, I was determined that I could learn management and leadership skills from my fellow EMBA students beyond the formal, academic learning in the classroom...The alumni network would be useful to my future career because I wanted to make a change to my work and lifestyle, unlike those younger managers who sought career progression or to make more money”. (Wang, Cheng Kung - 45)

Unlike younger managers in her cohort, Wang was older and having more managerial experience in her working life. Beyond what faculty members taught her about management and leadership theories, she expected to meet business leaders in the classroom. Her human capital would be developed and, more importantly, her social capital would be increased throughout networking activities. Seeking her goal of changing work and lifestyle, she aimed to network with fellow students outside the EMBA classroom. External career success, in terms of pay, was not viewed as very critical to Wang.

Other participants endorsed the view that the reasons for wanting to form networks were to seek career advice and opportunities and to gain greater visibility in senior management.

“I heard that there were many successful business people who did an Executive MBA at this business school. I felt that I could meet some senior people from large organisations and learn much from their success stories. Those people might give me some advice to advance my career in a different direction. Also their business connections might be useful for me in looking for new jobs.” (Yang, Cheng Chi - 40)

Attending a prestigious business school with talented business managers would enable Yang to learn lessons in career success from her classmates. She expected to seek help from her peers in terms of career advice.

“I am a computer specialist. I was a middle manager in an IT company before the EMBA. One day I met a former colleague in a supermarket...He told me that he had done an Executive MBA at this school. The experience of doing the EMBA was great; he bumped into some well-connected senior managers in big, international companies...This guy highly recommended this school and its programme so I hoped that I would have a chance to meet some important people who might give me a wider perspective.” (Sandra, Sun Yat-sen - 38)

Being a middle manager in an IT company, Sandra was constantly thinking of her career progress in future years. Running into a former colleague who had studied for an EMBA at National Sun Yat-sen University, she understood that the business school had a strong alumni database with influential members working in large companies. She wanted to gain greater visibility in senior management and saw that she might have an opportunity to get career advice from senior business people.

“On the first day when I started my EMBA, a fellow student said that she didn’t care about getting the degree. She was concerned about how many people she would meet and how many friends she could make in the EMBA classroom. Before the EMBA I didn’t realise that making friends was more important than learning new management skills. Altogether we had 40 students. I had never dreamt that I would get to know some important people, like female MPs, on the EMBA course.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

In order to attract talented students to take the EMBA programme, the business schools and their programmes have emphasized the value of the creation of alumni networks. Beyond studying new skills, seeking career advice and gaining visibility in senior management, the focus of building networks has often been identified as critical in job search and in career choices. Shih Ning reported that she wished to learn knowledge and skills prior to the programme, and did not realize the critical issue of building personal networks, but she was motivated by a fellow student at the beginning of the course. As a result, she developed invaluable networks in her cohort and mixed with talented people (e.g. female MPs).

For most British participants, the motivation for taking the programme was generally found to be personal interest, career advancement and gaining confidence. Only one woman from London Business School reported:

"I went to Windsor and met some LBS students who were working in the City... Networking with people working in London was one of my considerations."
(Lesley, LBS - 38)

5.3.2 Sustaining networks

British women (four women) acknowledged that they had benefited from mixing with talented people (students and faculty members) on the EMBA graduates in terms of their own learning experience rather than as a networking resource. Networking was seen as a valued group of people rather than as a resource which might help women's managerial careers.

"I made a good friend when I did my project on the MBA. She now lives in Australia but we still contact each other via e-mail." (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

"I have certainly used the learning team and the broader MBA stream on the course. I quite enjoyed meeting up with the people within my learning group after the MBA and talking about business ideas which I probably wouldn't have had before (the MBA)."
(Donna, Cranfield – 34)

The Taiwanese women (nine women) acknowledged that they had benefited from mixing with talented people and enjoyed networking activities. An interesting theme was that of how to sustain the networks made on the course.

"Before the EMBA was finished, we had decided that we needed to get together once or twice a year in future. Each year we chose four people to organise reunions...We aim

to have a package holiday in Taiwan every six months and an overseas holiday once a year. We were encouraged to take partners to attend the reunions. Interestingly, female students rarely turned up with their partners, but male students often liked to showcase their wives and children. Therefore, we got to know the partners, which enlarged our networking database. I found it very useful.” (Cindy, Cheng Chi - 42)

The Taiwanese women had proactively started planning and organizing reunions before the programme was finished. Cindy reported that organizing tours and inviting family members to take part were perceived as a useful networking approach beyond other social activities. The scope of networking activities extended to families.

“From day one most of us pointed out that networks would be the most crucial aspect of taking the Executive MBA so we planned and successfully took over a restaurant which had not been running very well near the Business School as a case study. Each of us invested NT\$20,000 (GBP400) on this project at the beginning so that all of us were shareholders. Every year we selected three fellow students to run the business. We also invited two faculty members as monitors... After the EMBA we continued running the restaurant and used the place for our reunions every few months. Everyone has a busy work schedule, but nobody finds an excuse to avoid showing up to the reunions as we are all shareholders.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

Conducting a restaurant project provided a learning opportunity for everyone on the EMBA programme and successfully convinced them to continue the networking activities on a regular basis. It was a great idea to take over and then to run a restaurant together with fellow students and faculty members. The learning experience of how to operate the restaurant was useful to all students and the opportunities for encouraging everybody to participate in this ongoing restaurant project were invaluable.

5.3.3 Outcomes from networking

There were a number of career benefits from creating, sustaining and/or developing networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends. From a broader perspective, networking activities helped participants to gain new customers and have a deeper understanding of customers' needs. Post-EMBA networking had positively influenced career outcomes in terms of sharing knowledge and exchanging information. Lin talked about her networking experience with great enjoyment:

“In my class many of us are senior managers. There are managing directors and general managers across industries and sectors. After completing the EMBA degree we decided to visit one student’s company each month. This person had to make a presentation introducing his/her company, products and customers and so on. Then we helped identify whether the company had opportunities to develop its business and what threats in the current market existed, what customers wanted and needed and how to acquire new customers etc through our expertise and professional perspectives in marketing, finance, operation management etc. Also we learnt management and leadership styles from one another.” (Lin, Cheng Chi - 45)

Organizing monthly visits to each alumnus’ company proved to be an effective way to continue learning business, management and leadership. Since many alumni were senior managers or leaders in their work organisations, they were clearly aware of their own companies’ general profiles and operational processes. Everyone had an opportunity to share professional and managerial experience with peers and alumni.

“Three of us were founders to the restaurant project. Two of us have had the experience of entrepreneurship, but had never run a restaurant before. Another founder was a middle manager in a large IT company. Planning and undertaking the project left us unforgettable memories, and its success boosted our confidence. Many new customers emerged in addition to those in our own business areas.” (Karen, Sun Yat-sen - 44)

Networking with the faculty members after the EMBA created a source of learning. They were able to solve business problems immediately when they faced them outside their functional experiences.

“One benefit was that I have known many lecturers on the course over the period of a two-year study. No matter how close or distant the communication between me and the lecturers, there is an opportunity for me to ask them questions when I encounter any technical problems which I can’t resolve immediately.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen - 39)

“I’ve got many lecturers’ mobile numbers in my diary. I could ring them any time when I need to.” (Su Chang, Cheng Kung - 45)

Being one of the active alumni and running a cosmetic manufacturing factory with her husband and daughters, Su Chang had established strong work relationships with faculty within the business school. She was able to contact members of faculty at any time since their contact mobile numbers were noted down in her diary.

A British participant reported the similar career benefit in terms of a source of learning from faculty.

“Mostly networking with friends happens in our year, sometimes with lecturers. When I get a particular question I can e-mail the lecturers because they know me and know I work for Rolls Royce.” (Wendy, Cranfield - 38)

Wendy identified that her alumni network was limited to the students in her school year. The connections with faculty were seen as important since she could contact one of the faculty members when she encountered a technical problem and needed seeking professional support.

“I knew that Dr XX at the business school could answer those questions. He would reply to me via e-mail quickly if I asked for his advice in a particular area in which I was lacking experience and confidence.” (Yang, Cheng Chi - 40)

Like Wendy’s situation at work, Yang revealed that she could drop an e-mail to a faculty member when she lacked confidence and knowledge to solve a business problem. She was able to get swift responses from the person whom she contacted when she sought professional advice.

“I am still getting involved sometimes with Cranfield events with XX. I have got a real buzz from going to those things. It reminds me why I did the MBA and what I wanted to get out of it. The MBA was a very positive experience for me. The whole education of the MBA was enjoyable.” (Nerys, Cranfield – 32)

The network activities showed women’s caring roles and organizational skills. Wang reported starting up her own oil painting club.

“Apart from running my own business with my husband, I set up an oil painting class, focusing on inviting fellow EMBA graduates to join. I wanted to improve my artistic skills, not just always focusing on business both at work and after work. Everyone who participates in this class feels that it’s a good opportunity to get together and exchange some information about what we have done recently.” (Wang, Cheng Kung - 45)

Job search and job opportunities (eight Taiwanese women and five Taiwanese women) were perceived as the career outcomes of sharing information and extending contacts through alumni networks.

“In the gourmet food club, we could gain job information as well as having fine food ... The club members also help each other to look for new jobs.” (Cindy, Cheng Chi - 42)

The women from London Business School also reported that alumni networks provided opportunities for new jobs, with the result that students sought information from networking activities.

“I got an e-mail from a gentleman called Ken. He just finished his Executive MBA at LBS. He said that he just set up a financial company and was looking for a marketing director. Last year he finished his MBA and looked me up at the alumni network. He just sent out e-mails to people who had internet experiences. I happened to be one of them. I thought it was marvelous because I had already been on the director level...So we had a couple of coffee and he offered me the job on spot which was brilliant. It all worked out absolutely fine. I joined this company in August. We have another guy who is running our sales team. He also did an MBA at LBS so three of us are ex-LBS Executive MBA people on the senior level.” (Kate, LBS – 35)

Kate’s post-EMBA experience was inspiring. Through the alumni database at London Business School, she was targeted by an alumnus who was looking for a senior business manager with internet experiences. Kate’s previous work history showed that she was a potential candidate. She accepted the offer to work in the new company and found there was another alumnus working with them together. This enabled the three people to use their individual expertise to co-ordinate and co-operate in developing and managing the company. Her story was summarized in the illustrative case study of chapter six.

“There were a number of people on the MBA in this sector which was helpful. Actually there was someone whom I knew. She wasn’t in the class; she was linked to the class and she was helping a lecturer out and doing some lecturing. She worked here at the time. When the boss here was interviewing me, he was a bit concerned about whether I had certain skill sets. She was the one who said that I would be brilliant at that. So I was very lucky to have that contact at the time when she was actually working for ‘XXXX’...I don’t think, without her help and wise counsel to my boss, he would have chosen me at that time.” (Colette, LBS – 39)

Unlike Kate’s experience through alumni networks, Colette acquired her general manager’s job with a charity through a former part-time lecturer who also happened to have worked in the charity before. She was recommended for a job interview and was highly supported by the lecturer when the interviewer questioned Colette’s ability

to be a leader (Colette did her first degree in chemistry and went on to complete her doctoral research in the same field at Oxford University). She valued the recommendation from the lecturer and was happy to take the senior role.

In particular three British women and six Taiwanese women reported that they had benefited from knowing professional people who shared the same background and interest as a result of completing the degree.

“The MBA has also allowed me the opportunity to network with professionals from different backgrounds and sectors. For example, I got to know some people on the MBA who were also working in the financial services in the City.” (Melissa, Cranfield – 35)

“I have used bits of the extended network, for example the other alumni that I have met. I used them on my final year’s project which I did with different companies - that was great experience.” (Donna, Cranfield – 34)

“We have a fellow student who is a lawyer. When I needed some legal advice, I just picked up my phone and spoke to him...Occasionally he attended the dinners which I organised in my food club.” (Su Chang, Cheng Kung – 45)

The valued group of friends mentioned by female participants (four British women) was often a learning group on the EMBA. Sharing information demonstrated a collective value of social networking.

“We had a little reunion every few months within our learning group. I met XX last week. She told me that you had interviewed her. I would be the next one.” (Nerys, Cranfield – 32)

“We have reunions so a lot of people on our course are still quite active, and still in contact. I knew that you met XX because she told me. Although it has been two years, we still contact each other and have a fair idea what is going on. Or if it is a particular issue which I need to find out about, people phone me or I phone them. I do get frequent phone calls from others. I don’t really get much through the alumni. I had a few people who contacted me for business, but not a huge amount.” (Wendy, Cranfield – 38)

Wendy revealed that reunions and telephone communication helped her and others to keep in touch all the time. In terms of talking about business, she admitted that there was not much happening among alumni.

“I guess that others have already spoken about the reunions in our restaurant. We valued the opportunities to get together and shared information about what we were doing.”
(Hong, Sun Yat-sen – 44)

Running the restaurant project was seen as creating an opportunity to get together after the EMBA and to keep in contact by exchanging information about what Taiwanese women were doing. Hong appreciated the chance to participate in the project which helped her to continue learning business and sharing managerial experience outside her work organisation.

5.3.4 Summary

The acquisition of social capital, in terms of networks, was considered very important in women's mid-career development. Women aged between 38 and 45 (three Taiwanese business schools) focused on reporting their career benefits from creating, sustaining and developing networks. The female participants from London Business School shared the career benefits in a similar way to the women from National Cheng Chi University, National Sun Yat-sen University and the two older women from National Cheng Kung University. As can be seen from tables six and seven, the women reported a number of career benefits: gaining professional support, sharing knowledge, exchanging information, extending contacts, seeking career advice and career advancement, gaining visibility in senior management, acquiring sponsors, career enjoyment and a source of learning and other commercial benefits (e.g. gaining a deep understanding of business customers). The female participants from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School as well as the four younger women from the National Cheng Kung University valued the networks by sharing information, extending contacts, seeking professional support and a source of learning.

The career benefits acquired by the women from the six business schools in the UK and Taiwan differed in terms of the acquisition of human, social and cultural capital following the completion of the EMBA programme. In Taiwan, all women from National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University and the two older women from National Cheng Kung University perceived career benefits similarly to the British women from London Business School in terms of acquiring social capital. In the UK women from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School perceived career benefits in a similar way to the four younger women from the National Cheng Kung University in terms of acquiring human and cultural capital.

Table 6: Career benefits from taking the degree, reported by Taiwanese women

	National Sun Yat-sen Business School (female students 16%)	National Cheng Kung Business School (female students 42%)	National Cheng Chi Business School (female students 22%)
Age profiles, Marital status, Children, Housekeeper	Women who were unmarried: 38, 39, 39 years old; married women: 44, 44, 45 years old with children, having housemaids	Women who were unmarried: 35, 36, 38 years old; married women: 36, 45, 45 years old with children, having housemaids	One woman was unmarried, 40 years old; one was married without children, 44 years old; married women with children: 41, 42, 42, 45 years old, having housemaids
Acquisition of human capital reported by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge (new management ideas and business theory) •Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills) •Confidence in ability to deal with people (males and senior people) •Other benefits: personal satisfaction and awareness in business areas and career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge (new management ideas and business theory) •Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills), some women did not gain 'soft' skills •Confidence in ability to be a good manager and to deal with people (senior and difficult people) •Other benefits: awareness in business areas and career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge (new management ideas and business theory) •Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills) •Other benefits: awareness in business areas and career paths
Acquisition of social capital reported by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Seeking profession support •Sharing knowledge •Exchanging information •Extending contacts •Seeking career advice/ planning and career advancement •Gaining visibility in senior management •Career enjoyment •A source of learning •Acquiring sponsors •Other commercial benefits: business leads and customer acquisition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A source of learning •Seeking profession support •Sharing knowledge •Exchanging information •Extending contacts •Seeking career planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Career enjoyment •Gaining profession support •Sharing knowledge •Exchanging information •Extending contacts •Seeking career advice and career advancement •Gaining visibility in senior management •A source of learning •Other commercial benefits: gaining a deeper understanding of customers, business leads and customer acquisition
Acquisition of cultural capital reported by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improved career status, leading to personal reputation and potential career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improved career status, leading to personal reputation and potential career opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improved career status, leading to personal reputation and potential career opportunities

Table 7: Career benefits from taking the degree, reported by British women

	Cranfield School of Management (female students 28%)	Cass Business School (female students 21%)	London Business School (female students 18%)
Age profiles, Marital status, Children	One woman was unmarried, 38 years old; married women with children: 34, 34, 34, 35* years old; one married woman without children: 32 years old	Women who were unmarried: 32, 32 years old; married women without children: 32,33,34 years old; one married woman with children: 45 years old	Women who were unmarried: 35, 36, 37 years old; married women without children: 35, 38 and 39 years old
Acquisition of human capital reported by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge (new management ideas and business theory) •Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills) •Confidence in ability to be a good manager, to deal with people (senior people and difficult people) and to gain more respect •Other benefits: personal satisfaction, awareness in business areas and career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge (new management ideas and business theory) •Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills) •Confidence in ability to be a good manager, to deal with people (senior people), to cope with change and uncertainty and to gain more respect •Other benefits: personal satisfaction, awareness in business areas and career paths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Knowledge (new management ideas and business theory) •Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills) •Confidence was not seen as very important •Other benefits: personal satisfaction, awareness in business areas and career paths
Acquisition of social capital reported by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sharing information •A source of learning (from faculty) •Searching for new jobs •Seeking professional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sharing information •A source of learning (from faculty and students) •Seeking professional support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Exchanging information •Extending contacts •Seeking professional support •A source of learning (from faculty) •Searching for new jobs, leading to pay increases
Acquisition of cultural capital reported by participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improved career status, leading to personal reputation, increased career opportunities, salary increases and management promotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improved career status, leading to increased career opportunities, salary increases and management promotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improved career status, leading to personal reputation, increased career opportunities, salary increases and management promotions

**Only one married woman with a child has a nanny in the British sample.*

CHAPTER 6: THE ACQUISITION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

CHAPTER SIX: THE ACQUISITION OF SOCIAL CAPITAL

While the last chapter looked at the results in general in terms of the career benefits as a result of completing the Executive MBA (EMBA) programme, the next two chapters analyse the similarities and differences between British and Taiwanese women in terms of how they perceive the acquisition of human, social and cultural capital respectively. This chapter concentrates on social capital.

6.1 Acquiring social capital

The focus of examining social capital is on the acquisition of networks. Female managers in Taiwan perceived the importance of creating and maintaining networks and benefited from developing networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends during and after the EMBA programme. The findings from the British sample (particularly the women from London Business School) presented a number of career benefits from acquiring networks as a result of completing the programme. Nonetheless, unlike the Taiwanese women in this research, the networks were not seen as important to most British women (female graduates from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School).

There are different perceptions on the acquisition of social capital by the British and Taiwanese women. The following sections will show similarities and differences and explain why they exist.

6.2 The similarities and differences in career benefits

There were different career benefits from networking activities by the British and Taiwanese women. The Taiwanese women gained more career benefits from acquiring networks than the British women in a number of areas. Prior to the Executive MBA programme, Taiwanese women (women from National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University, and the two older women from National Cheng Kung University) perceived the importance of creating and maintaining their networks. They enjoyed the invaluable career benefits from their networks acquired as a result of completing the EMBA programme. The British women from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School, all in their early and mid-career stages, did not perceive the importance of developing networks before the EMBA, but enjoyed some benefits of gaining them following the completion of the EMBA. The female managers from London Business School perceived career benefits from networking in a similar way to their Taiwanese

counterparts from the National Sun Yat-sen University and the National Cheng Chi University. Interestingly, these women were all in the middle stage of their careers.

Looking at the women from the London Business School, National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University, the motivation for establishing networks for the women looked similar.

“I thought about doing an MBA in the States. When I looked at it, I realized that I would end up having networks there. I actually wanted to build on everything I have done here in my previous life. Having built my networks in the US, I possibly was not going to get a work permit there. It did not make a lot of sense so LBS was the obvious place to go...to be honest, I didn’t take part in many alumni activities.” (Lesley, LBS – 38)

Lesley was a senior manager specializing in business strategy when she was interviewed. She studied architecture for her first degree in Scotland. Having worked in London and lectured in King’s College, Lesley set up her own architecture practice with a group of friends and then sold it and became an employee again. The motivation for her to take an EMBA at LBS was personal development and career advancement. Prior to taking the course, she had met a number of talented graduates who took MBA studies at LBS. She was inspired by these people and their success stories. She had thought about taking an EMBA in the US before but she understood that studying there would allow her to network with many Americans rather than British business managers with whom she really needed contact. Networking with fellow students appeared to be a main concern in her career development. She admitted that having domestic duties alongside a business career gave her little time to network with peers upon graduation.

“Many people came to the MBA at LBS for building up networks and seeking personal interest. They also wanted to develop and consolidate their expertise. Some want to have broader expertise when they start up their own businesses. Creating networks seems more important than learning business.” (Sam, LBS – 37)

Sam’s personal and career history were very different from other women at LBS. She spent most of her childhood in South Africa, and moved back to the UK following the completion of her first degree. Based in Brussels when the interview took place, Sam had actually worked for General Motors in the UK and Belgium for a number of years. She still spent a lot of time in London for business, thus building and maintaining networks with fellow EMBA students and faculty seemed to be important. Sam was

enthusiastic about organizing alumni reunions. She made an effort to see her fellow EMBA friends every time she was in London.

“This school was a good venue to meet successful people from different sectors. I need influential and powerful people in my address book.” (Cindy, Cheng Chi – 42)

Cindy was a general manager at an American head-hunting company in Taipei. Looking at the nature of her day-to-day business, it was understandable that Cindy’s motivation for studying an EMBA was to establish connections with various business managers beyond studying managerial skills and acquiring knowledge. She decided to choose National Cheng Chi University on the basis of its strong profiles of students and the alumni body in which many of them were senior business people.

“They have outstanding graduates and faculty members, having established a reputation of recruiting top management people to study the programme. Networking with those people would help me to gain visibility in senior management.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Unlike Cindy, Jenny had worked in a large IT company for some years. She was a middle manager, single and had a lot of energy, despite her busy working life. Jenny started thinking of developing herself since she had come to a crossroads in her career. Gaining visibility in senior managers and creating networks with top management people in different business areas were perceived as being important in her career development. Choosing National Sun Yat-sen University to study for an EMBA was her first choice since the business school offered a well-established programme as well as having built a strong alumni database in Taiwan.

Participants spoke about networks as a source of learning:

“This morning I actually had a meeting with one of my old lecturers here (at LBS). It was an area which I did not know. I realized that someone at LBS knew about it so I had a coffee with him and got the things I needed.” (Sam, LBS – 37)

“A senior lecturer was actually one of the trustees in my company. After the MBA, I often ran into him in business meetings and alumni activities.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Both Sam from London Business School and Shih Ning from National Sun Yat-sen University were among the youngest when they first started the EMBA. They were single and middle managers in their work organisations. Sam spent much of her time in Brussels at the time when she was interviewed. Interestingly, Sam tried her best to

return to London, meeting friends, peers and faculty members from the EMBA programme. Shih Ning went on to work at the same company following the completion of her programme. Her company had many business connections with National Sun Yat-sen University through research and development projects. Building networks with faculties at their respective business schools helped both women to continue learning out of their own business areas and to keep in touch with the latest business developments.

“I actually spend a lot of time at LBS after the MBA because I feel that learning should not be stopped. I must keep learning new things. I need to keep in contact with people: it is useful to my business career.” (Kate, LBS – 35)

Kate was a marketing director at a small and medium-sized IT company in London. Feeling a strong need for life-long learning in business and management, she was happy to return to the London Business School, meeting new friends and extending her business contacts.

“The alumni office organised academic seminars and invited us to attend. There were some big keynote speakers. I participated in many of those events since I wanted to continue learning from successful people and enhance my managerial skills.” (Yang, Cheng Chi – 40)

Yang was a middle manager in a small IT company in Taipei, which was founded by her fellow EMBA classmates. She accepted the job offer and found that she knew little about the IT industry. Attending seminars and learning from other business people made her confident that she could perform a good job and that her managerial career would develop fast in this new area.

The participants reported that maintaining networks required a lot of work which was not easy for managers who could be very busy and who located in different parts of the world. Communicating via e-mail and running a joint project helped the women to keep in touch all the time.

“I have enjoyed the networks. I spent a lot of time catching up with my old classmates whom I met at different lectures. It requires a lot of work because I am not physically based in London. Some of my LBS friends chose to expatriate after the MBA. A lot of them are in different parts of the globe so we write e-mails and make phone calls remotely in terms of networking. Hopefully we can see each other at least once a year. I realize that we have to make a lot of effort to keep it going.” (Sam, LBS - 37)

“We tried hard to get together every few months. Some people do not live in this city after the MBA. The project of running the restaurant enabled us to keep working on it along with the enjoyment of tasting food together.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

“The class I was in, we kept together fairly well. We kept meeting up very regularly. Actually getting into this job it (networking) was really helpful.” (Colette, LBS -39)

Unlike Sam and Shih Ning, Colette was married, working as a general manager at a charity in London. Prior to starting an EMBA, she had worked for a pharmaceutical company for some years in the northern part of England. A part-time lecturer at London Business School helped her to move into a senior management job in the charity. The people who interviewed her raised concerns about her ability and skills to work in a new field. This lecturer persuaded the interviewers that Colette had the ability to do well. Hence, she valued the networks which were created on the programme and, in particular, she enjoyed the networking activities with female students. She predicted that she would change her job in a few years' time and explore her career in another area. The networks with friends, peers and alumni were greatly valued by her.

There are different career benefits in terms of acquiring social capital. Unlike Taiwanese women who did not immediately get salary increases, the women from LBS reported job changes and salary increases as a result of acquiring networks at the business school.

“I think the network was a big benefit. Had I not met the CEO at LBS, I am not sure I would have ended up working here. The initial contact came through the fact we had been on the study group project together so we had communicated with each other a lot. I am earning much more than before.” (Alex, LBS -35)

Alex was married without children. When the interview took place, Alex was working as a business development manager at an investment bank in London. The CEO whom she met on the EMBA hired her; this led her to an increased salary and new working environment in the banking industry. Her EMBA network had resulted in a tangible career benefit.

It is important to note that the female managers from London Business School admitted that they did not use the networks very much although they understood the value of networking activities.

“I suppose I haven’t used them (networks) very much. I am quite happy here right now. It is a sort of a thing I feel comfortable with and I could draw on. I would have to say there are many opportunities for senior women to advance careers, but I really like where I am.” (Lesley, LBS – 38)

“I did not use the LBS networks much. I didn’t like the idea of using them in an aggressive way. I met up with a lot of people I liked when I was on the MBA.” (Alex, LBS -35)

Lesley understood the importance of acquiring networks from taking the EMBA programme. Lesley got her current job through alumni networks. Having a family to take care of after work, Lesley realized that she did not have time to network with her fellow students after the EMBA. Similarly, Alex admitted that she did not use the networks which were built up during the course.

The Taiwanese women recognised the importance of sustaining networks in the EMBA cohort.

“It was important to continue building up networks after the EMBA. The restaurant project was a great idea. In fact, the last year’s students ran a restaurant in the centre of the city.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

There was a greater recognition of the career benefits of networking reported by the Taiwanese women. Acquiring new customers and gaining a deeper understanding of business customers was raised by one female participant:

“I just spoke about the visits to other companies run by our fellow classmates. I am running a head-hunting company. Many people came to me after the MBA, and asked whether they could be invited to visit my company. I was happy to do so because I knew that they wanted to know more people whom I had in my database. They also wanted to know more details or profiles about important people” (Cindy, Cheng Chi -42)

After the EMBA, Cindy invited fellow students to visit her company and helped them to gain a better understanding of what business she was running and what sorts of customers the company looked after.

“It’s a media company. We have many female employees. The next step in my career would be managing director in the Taipei area. Looking at how other senior people

work and learning from their experiences, through the monthly visits to classmates, gave me a wider picture. I have confidence that I shall do well in future years. Doing the MBA and gaining networks was great.” (Kong, Cheng Chi – 44)

Kong was married without children. She was born in a small fishing village near Taipei, and was the second child of six brothers and sisters. Her parents were not well off but they ran their own grocery store in which she helped out all the way through her education. She also helped them look after her young siblings in ways such as assisting them with their homework while her parents were busy. While helping in the store, observing people going about their chores and serving customers, Kong started to think about her future. It seemed that she would have numerous options only she left this small village. When she was young she wanted to be a teacher because it would provide her with a stable and well-paid job in Taiwan. Since she went to study sociology in a university in Taipei, her career choices had changed from time to time. She ended up working in a media company and over time moved to a senior position.

In this research, the acquisition of social capital was not seen as important to British women (Cranfield and Cass) and the four Taiwanese women (Cheng Kung) as the acquisition of human and cultural capital. However, the research has answered Sturges’ question (Sturges et al., 2003) as to whether the career stages of female managers have an impact on the acquisition of social capital (networks). Table 8 presents general profiles of students on the EMBA programme at National Cheng Kung University, Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School. It helps to explain why these women did not emphasize the importance of gaining and developing networks as a career benefit from completing an MBA because they were younger than the other participants and probably placed greater priority on human and cultural capital.

Table 8: Comparisons among two British schools and one Taiwanese school

	Cranfield School of Management	Cass Business School	National Cheng Kung University
Age	Many students (men and women) embarked on the course in their late 20s and early 30s, unmarried and/or having partners but women decided to postpone marriage and childbirth.	The majority of students (men and women) took the course in their mid and late 20s, unmarried and/or having partners but women decided to postpone marriage and childbirth.	Many female students embarked on the course in their late 20s and early 30s; the majority of them were unmarried.
Managerial experience	Prior to the EMBA, many women were junior and middle managers. Seeking personal development was a main reason to study the programme.	Prior to the EMBA, many women were junior managers. Seeking career advancement was a main reason to take the programme.	Prior to the EMBA, many women (except two older women) were junior managers. Personal interest and career development were seen as a motivating factor.
Alumni network activities (based on the conversations with heads of alumni offices)	The alumni office organised regular alumni network events to attract graduates. The geographical location might have prevented some people from attending the events.	The Business School encouraged graduates to network, but some of them were unable to participate in the networking activities because of various reasons (e.g. working abroad or relocating outside London area).	The alumni office organised a number of networking activities each year. Some graduates (younger ones) did not bother attending them since they rarely felt that the activities were useful to their careers.

In the Taiwanese sample, middle and senior managers (aged between 35 and 40) focused more on the acquisition of social capital than human and cultural capital (this excluded the four younger women from National Cheng Kung University). Senior managers (aged between 41 and 45) concentrated on the career benefits in terms of their motivation for creating networks, sustaining and developing them in the long term. Extending contacts (peers and friends) and mixing with talented people (faculty and alumni) appear critical to women at mid-career. There were a number of the career benefits from networking with alumni, faculty, peers and friends:

- Gaining visibility in senior management
- Seeking career advice, career planning and career advancement
- Extending contacts
- Acquiring sponsors

- Exchanging information
- Sharing knowledge
- Seeking professional support
- A source of learning
- Career enjoyment
- Other commercial benefits: gaining a deeper understanding of customers, acquiring new customers, solving immediate problems and business leads

In the British sample (women from London Business School), middle and senior managers (aged between 35 and 39) focused on career benefits in terms of their career outcomes from acquiring networks. The career benefits were:

- Extending contacts
- Seeking professional support
- A source of learning (from faculty members)
- Exchanging information
- Searching for new jobs, leading to salary increases

What is clear is that it is hard to separate the three concepts of career capital empirically (Sturges et al., 2003), since, for the British and Taiwanese female managers in the research, the acquisition of human, social and cultural capital are interdependent. For some women, the acquisition of confidence was influenced by the possession of new managerial skills and knowledge and the mix with talented people (fellow students and faculty members) in the EMBA classroom. The British women (younger women) talked about the informal learning that came about through contact with their peer groups while on the course. However, their career benefits were limited to sharing information and a source of learning from members of faculty. Further research is needed to expand upon and develop such links among the development of the three concepts of career capital.

6.3 What factors have influenced the acquisition of social capital?

The findings suggest three factors which affect individual woman's career benefits, in terms of acquiring social capital:

- Age: women's different career stages (early, middle and late)
- Managerial experience: junior, middle and senior managers
- Cultural background: Chinese and British culture

In this research, age and managerial experience influenced the career benefits which female graduates had acquired from taking the programme. Taiwanese women who were older tended to be senior managers in their organisations, focusing on the acquisition of social capital in terms of networks. Women who acquired the networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends valued the benefits of the networks and enjoyed developing and maintaining them, for example by forming clubs. Moreover, they brought valuable corporate experience to the EMBA cohort; they helped junior and middle managers to gain visibility in senior management, and to seek career advice and career advancement. Those women who were younger tended to be junior and middle managers, concentrating initially on the attainment of human capital in terms of confidence or managerial skills and the acquisition of cultural capital in terms of career status. The experience of the EMBA helped younger women to comprehend and to focus on the importance of acquiring and developing the networks beyond the acquisition of human and cultural capital.

Table 8: Similarities of social capital outcome among one British school and two Taiwanese schools

	London Business School	National Sun Yat-sen University	National Cheng Chi University
Age	Many female students embarked on the course in their mid and late 30s, unmarried and/or having partners but women decided to postpone marriage and childbirth.	Many female students started the course in their late 30s and early 40s, and they were married, having children (some children were grown up).	Many female students embarked on the course in their late 30s and early and mid-40s, and they were married, having children (some children were grown up)
Managerial experience	Prior to the EMBA, many women were middle managers. Learning new managerial skills and seeking job opportunities were main reasons to take the programme.	Prior to the EMBA, many women were middle and senior managers. The motivation for taking the programme was networking and studying managerial skills and leadership.	Prior to the EMBA, many women were middle and senior managers. The main reason to take the programme was networking and studying managerial skills and leadership.
Acquiring social capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Exchanging information •Seeking professional support •Extending contacts •Searching for new jobs, leading to job opportunities, salary increases and promotions •A source of learning •Acquiring sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gaining visibility in senior management •Seeking career advice & career advancement •Sharing knowledge •Exchanging information •Extending contacts •Acquiring sponsors •Career enjoyment •A source of learning •Seeking professional support •Other commercial benefits: business leads, customer acquisition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Gaining visibility in senior management •Seeking career planning & career advancement •Sharing knowledge •Exchanging information •Extending contacts •Seeking professional support •Career enjoyment •A source of learning •Other commercial benefits: business leads, a deep understanding of customer

Female graduates at the London Business School perceived the outcomes of developing networks and benefited from the networks created on the EMBA programme more than those at Cranfield and Cass. Table 9 shows the similarities of acquiring social capital which the women of the LBS and those from National Sun Yat-sen and Cheng Chi Universities perceived. The female managers who chose to study at the LBS tended to be older and more senior than those at the other two British business schools. They reported that the career benefits were a source of learning,

exchanging information, seeking professional support, acquiring sponsors, extending contacts, searching for new jobs. The immediate benefits from searching for new jobs were increased job opportunities, salary growth and management promotions. The female managers who graduated from the Cranfield School of Management and the Cass Business School reported that their networking activities were usually limited to their learning groups on the EMBA programme or the fellow students in the same school year.

The Taiwanese women in this research experienced uninterrupted careers, suggesting that marriage and parenthood were not generally found to be a problem for female managers in Taiwan. Housework was a problem for Taiwanese female managers in the early period of their marriage and career. Yet they were able to hire a housemaid to take care of domestic work once they achieved a good managerial income (Cheng and Liao, 1994). This research showed that married women could afford to have housemaids (see table 5) so that they continued working and making progress in their work organizations. The paid domestic help, either part-time or full-time, usually provides childcare, elderly care, cleaning and cooking. Many Taiwanese families employ live-in maids very cheaply from South Eastern Asian countries (e.g., the Philippines or Indonesia). The latter is encouraged by governmental policies in Taiwan.

In the UK, most part-time and temporary jobs are held by women. However, there are very few part-time opportunities in management (Venter, 2002). Across the globe management and professional careers seem to be characterized by long hours (Alder, 1993; Omar and Davidson, 2001). The organization of the family appears to be fundamental to the ways in which women work and the opportunities that female managers have. There is a direct relationship between women's career and their role in the family. They may leave paid employment to have children and to bring them up, or may change a job to 'fit in' better with family demands and the perceived role of women within this. As a result, the organisations of the family and of working life are so demanding that women find it difficult to dedicate sufficient time to a continuous professional or managerial career (Omar and Davidson, 2001; Venter, 2002). This is very different in Taiwan.

Commonly female managers without children in the UK and Taiwan are able to focus on their careers and share a similar desire to see their career progress and to gain financial rewards. For those women in the UK who are married some tensions start to emerge generally in terms of how the home is organized (Adler and Izraeli, 1994;

Venter, 2002). For some women in the British sample of this research, they reported that they chose to marry and to have children following the completion of the EMBA programme. Understandably their partners were supportive of the decision to delay marriage and childbirth. However, marriage and parenthood are not found to be a problem for Taiwanese women because of the availability of accessible domestic help and an extended family. In the illustrative case study (section 6.4.3), Cindy experienced her uninterrupted managerial career although she had two teenage daughters at home. Her mother had offered support and Cindy was able to hire a part-time housemaid to look after her family.

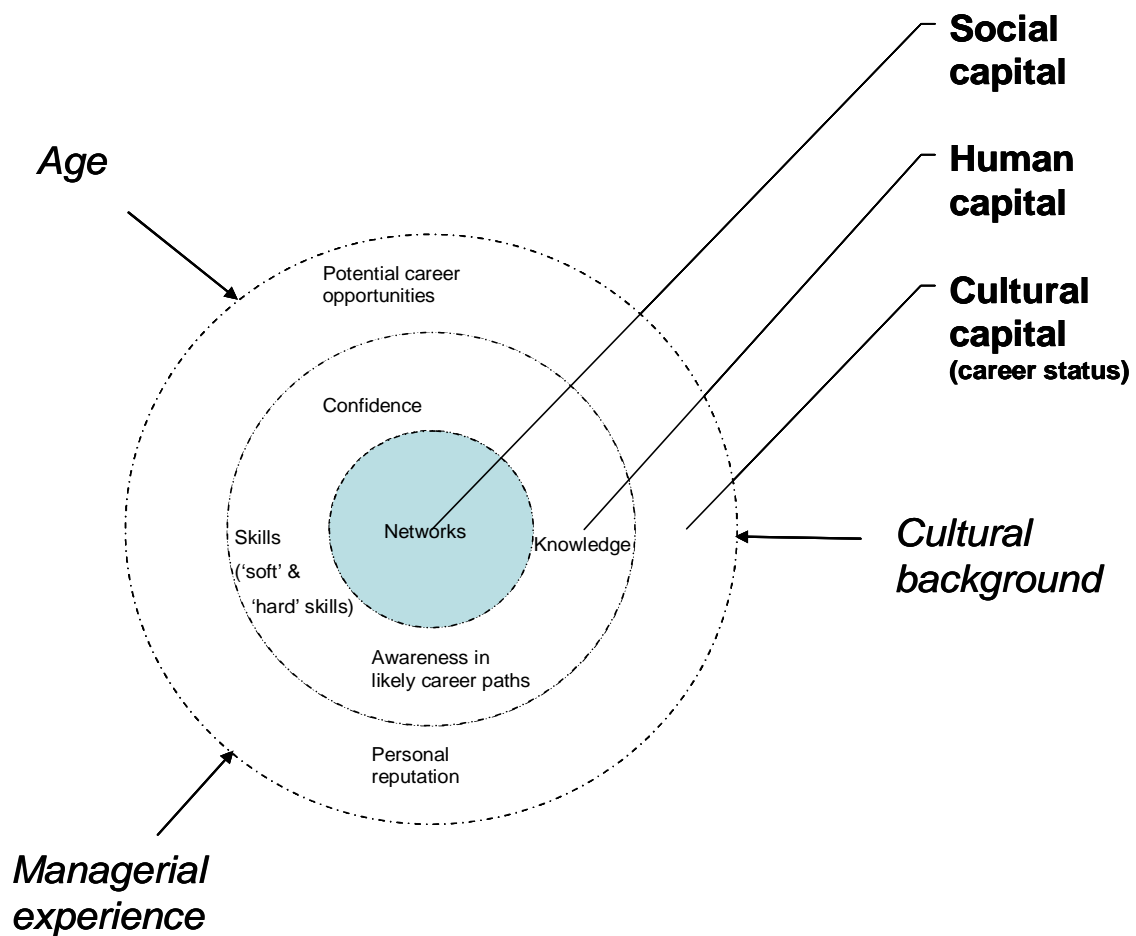
The system of *Guanxi* (social networks) in Taiwan played a key role in influencing women's perspectives on social networking. This explained the reasons why so many women (middle and senior managers) took the EMBA studies and sought to create and maintain networks with fellow students and faculty members. It is believed that building and developing networks is a lifetime project. The exchange of information favours in the *Guanxi* system is so critical that *Guanxi* acts as an 'information bridge' (Langenberg, 2007). Influential and powerful people owe their success to informational benefits derived from the system. Senior managers have opportunities to acquire the information from various channels through their seniority, background and connections. Many research studies have attributed the success of *Guanxi* to Confucianism, which stresses scholarship, hard work, thrift and perseverance (Yeung and Tung, 1996; Langenberg, 2007). Confucianism encourages each individual to become a righteous person who must repay favors and increase the value of the favor given. Chinese consider *Guanxi* as personal assets and they are usually reluctant to talk openly about their connections.

Structural factors have made *Guanxi* a major system of social exchange. According to Confucianism, followers have role obligations to demonstrate their unconditional support and devotion to their superiors, even to the extent of sacrificing their own life. At the same time, leaders or superiors have role obligations to protect, care for and give favors to their followers. This behavioral norm is like two sides of a coin, the one validating and reinforcing the other. Hence, when subordinates have good *Guanxi* with their supervisors, they can expect to receive rewards from their supervisors (Yeung and Tung, 1996).

As was mentioned in chapter 2, the basic principal of Confucianism stresses the importance of an individual's place in the hierarchy of social relationships (collectivism) in which individuals are part of a system of interdependent relationships,

not isolated entities. An individual's fulfillment of the responsibilities of a given role ensures the smooth functioning of society (Yeung and Tung, 1996). Revisiting the findings from the Taiwanese sample, senior managers helped junior and middle managers to understand the importance of building networks so that the motivation for acquiring the networks was emphasized. In the illustrative case study (section 6.4.2), Shih Ning realized the importance of creating networks while a fellow student was speaking about her motivation at the beginning of the programme. Shih Ning enjoyed thoroughly the career benefits from developing and maintaining the networks during and after the EMBA. Moreover, conducting a restaurant project by the EMBA students at National Sun Yat-sen University is an excellent example of demonstrating collective values. Everyone benefited from a perspective of collectivism by developing and sustaining networks inside and outside the EMBA classroom. Model 5 shows the career benefits which Taiwanese women gained from taking the Executive MBA programme at mid-career. The blue colouring in the model highlights the centrality of particular career benefits over others.

Model 5: Career benefits to female managers in Taiwan



In the West, however, the primary influence on human behaviour is individualism and personal interest (Hofstede, 2001; Gannon 2004). In this research, the British women at Cranfield School of Management emphasized that personal development was a main reason for taking EMBA studies. Others (LBS and Cass) indicated personal career prospects. This dissimilarity between the two contrasting cultures has probably led to the development of different attitudes about social networking. In the illustrative case study (section 6.4.1), Kate's motivation for studying an EMBA was to add a business qualification to her CV and networking was unimportant in her previous working life.

Strategic management in the Chinese societies includes an understanding of the relationship between situations and time. This perspective stems from the Chinese people's belief that duality and contradictions (*yin/yang*) are inherent in all aspects of life. Members of Confucian societies assume the interdependence of events, and

understand all social interactions within the context of a long-term balance sheet. *Guanxi* is maintained and reinforced through continuous, long-term association and interaction (Yeung and Tung, 1996; Langenberg, 2007). In this research, the Taiwanese women perceived that creating and maintaining networks was very important and they understood that the ‘investment return’ from the networks would be acquired in the long term. In the illustrative case study (section 6.4.3), Cindy reported her enjoyment of forming a gourmet food and wine club which enabled everyone to keep in touch and to continue networking upon graduation. Given that Cindy worked in a head-hunting company, it is understandable that networking activities were viewed as critical. This research did not attempt to measure whether networking was more prevalent and critical in some industries than others in Taiwan, hence I did not specifically analyse the interview data in this aspect.

In contrast, social transactions in the West are usually seen as isolated occurrences. The aim is to maintain balance in each transaction, with great emphasis placed on immediate gains from the interaction (Yeung and Tung, 1996). This showed in this research where many British women valued the MBA because of the immediate salary increases and promotions. The merits of networks were often neglected and were not viewed as important in their career development. In the illustrative case study (section 6.4.1), an alumnus found Kate’s profile in the alumni database and offered her a job of senior manager in an IT company shortly after graduation. She enjoyed the immediate benefits from alumni networking although previously she did not feel that networks were critical to career success.

6.4 Illustrative case studies

6.4.1 Kate’s story

Kate was one of the British interviewees from the London Business School. At the age of 35 she is now a senior manager in a small and medium-sized company.

Kate completed her undergraduate degree in classics at St Andrew’s University in Scotland. Upon graduation she did not know what she wanted to do. Prior to working at Cathay Pacific Airlines in Hong Kong (1994-1996), she worked very briefly for John Lewis. In 1996, Kate returned to the UK and then found a job with the Financial Times in the City. After a while she took a year off, going to Oxford to study a postgraduate degree in classics. She was inspired by her boss who had a bachelor’s degree from Oxford and had taken a full-time MBA at London Business School. Kate received a scholarship from LBS which paid some of her fees in the

first year. Then she got a job offer from BT which funded the second year of her study. Following the completion of her EMBA she continued to work for BT. Soon she was promoted to the post of senior manager when her boss left his job. She left BT because she found that BT was a very hard place for women in terms of career development. One day she got an e-mail from a gentleman called XX who had just finished his EMBA at LBS and who discovered her profile in the alumni database. Kate's life has completely changed ever since XX offered her a job of marketing director in an IT company. Performing a more senior role and getting better paid than before brought her greater personal satisfaction.

Prior to the EMBA programme, Kate was thinking of adding a business qualification to her CV which was her only motivation for taking the course. Networking was unimportant to her. In the interview, however, she indicated that the obvious, direct benefits from taking the programme at LBS were the networks. She acquired her new job through the alumni network. Because of this new job her salary was increased and her profile was improved.

Kate is unmarried and lives with her partner. Since passing the EMBA, she had continued to attend alumni network events at LBS. Kate believes that such events help her to gain more contacts and business customers.

6.4.2 Shih Ning's story

Shih Ning did her first degree in civil engineering at Providence University in Taichung (in central Taiwan). Soon after graduation she went to Manchester University and completed her postgraduate degree in urban design in the UK. On her return to Taiwan, she worked for two different consultancy companies in Taipei.

At the time when the interview took place she was a middle manager (the only female middle manager) in a large construction company which was building the MRT in Kaohsiung. She acquired this job because of her educational background and through family connections with this project. In the interview, she explained that she chose to take the EMBA programme because the business school (National Sun Yat-sen University) was close to where she lived and also because she needed a qualification in business and management and wished to study managerial skills.

At the age of 39 Shih Ning is unmarried. In her free time, she likes traveling and never fails to participate in the post-EMBA network activities. Her fellow EMBA friends organize trips abroad each year and many dinner parties at the restaurant where

she is a shareholder. She was about 34 years old at the beginning of the EMBA programme and one of the youngest students in the classroom. Interestingly, she was surprised by a fellow student's statement on the importance of networks when she first started the programme. She valued the experience of taking the programme and genuinely enjoyed the benefits of networking with peers, faculty and friends during and after the course. When facing a business problem at work, Shih Ning would drop an e-mail to a former lecturer or a fellow EMBA student who could help her to solve the problem immediately. Beyond acquiring invaluable networks, learning new managerial skills and gaining confidence were also perceived career benefits from completing the course. Given that she was working in a male-dominated world on a day-to-day basis, Shih Ning emphasized that the negotiation and communication skills taught on the course enabled her to deal with male colleagues in a more effective way than before. In addition the networking activities with senior male managers on the EMBA offered her an opportunity to understand and to cope with men's particular leadership and management styles.

6.4.3 Cindy's story

At the age of 42 Cindy is the general manager of an American company in Taipei. She did her first degree in economics in Taipei. Having worked for an investment bank in Taiwan and the Singapore Airlines in Singapore in her twenties, Cindy joined her current company which has an American branch in Taipei.

After finishing her contract with Singapore Airlines, she married her childhood sweetheart. Cindy has two teenage girls. Her mother offered domestic and emotional support when the children were little. Like many female managers in Taiwan, she worked without breaks in her career. Her husband supported her choice of an uninterrupted career, but this did not take the form of him actually taking on any of her responsibilities in the household chores. A part-time housemaid took care of the domestic work so that she could concentrate on her senior management role in working life. She was promoted to the post of general manager prior to starting her MBA. In the Taiwanese sample of this research, Cindy was unusual in the fact that she was the only female manager working in a foreign company. Unlike other Taiwanese women who were able to finance themselves, she persuaded her American employer to sponsor her study. She chose to study the programme at National Cheng Chi University, where she reckoned that she would meet influential and powerful people.

In the interview, Cindy felt that mixing with many talented people in the EMBA classroom was a great career benefit. Sharing business knowledge and managerial skills during and after the programme enabled her to perform a better job in the workplace. Regular visits to companies run by fellow students helped her to gain a better understanding of men's and women's leadership techniques and management performance in different sectors beyond the structured and academic learning of the classroom. Forming a gourmet food and wine club created a venue to extend business contacts in addition to the EMBA alumni she already had.

CHAPTER 7: THE ACQUISITION OF HUMAN AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

CHAPTER SEVEN: THE ACQUISITION OF HUMAN AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

While the last chapter shows the importance of creating and maintaining networks and the career benefits which accrued from networks, this chapter discusses the acquisition of human and cultural capital. The last chapter concluded by indicating the link between age and managerial level and the perceived career benefits of studying an Executive MBA (EMBA). The older and more senior women placed an emphasis on the social capital acquired from taking the programme. In this chapter, the results show that the younger and less senior females placed greater emphasis on the human and cultural capital.

7.1 Acquiring human capital

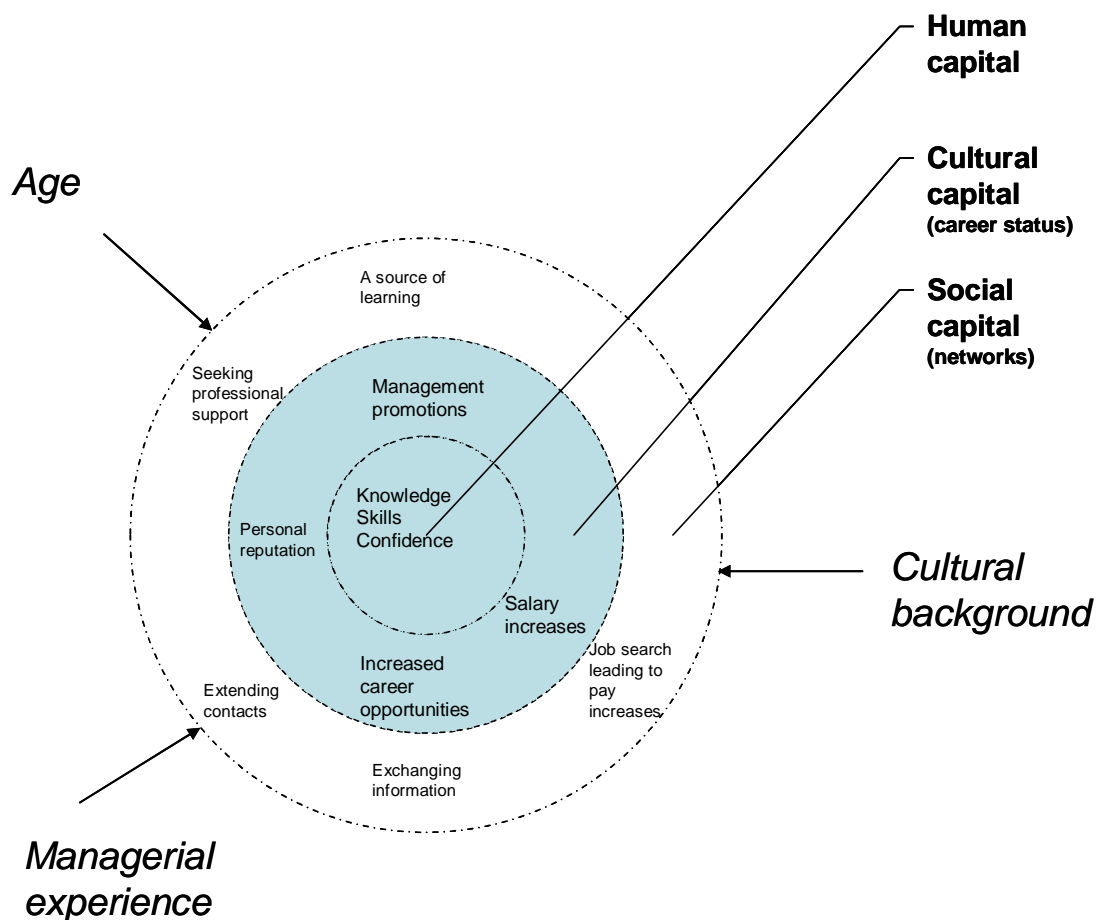
The British findings showed that gaining confidence was seen as important to the career development of junior and middle managers. This result appeared to reinforce the previous research that many students embarked on an MBA, generally a time-consuming and demanding process, with a view to stimulating their career advancement (Sturges et al., 2003, Simpson et al., 2004). The MBA programme offered female managers the time and space away from work to think about their career and aspirations (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000). Female managers in the three British business schools who chose to study for an EMBA did so because they wished to change the direction of their career and therefore were likely to regard the opportunity of MBA studies as a deliberate attempt to build confidence which they needed at workplace (Sturges et al., 2003).

Studying career-relevant skills and gaining job-related knowledge were also very important to the British women. This was not surprising, since one of the aims of MBA programmes was to help participants to acquire business knowledge and to study managerial skills. Moreover, this research confirmed that ‘soft’ skills, relating to human resources management skills and leadership styles, were seen as critical by female students at the British business schools. The acquisition of the ‘soft’ skills did not relate simply to the experience of team working (building collective values), a central part of many programmes, but rather to an increased awareness of a broader perspective of people-management issues (Sturges et al., 2003). This exposure to a wide range of people and experiences on the Executive MBA programme, rather than any specific structured and academic learning in the classroom, appeared to be a career benefit for British female managers.

7.2 Acquiring cultural capital

Gaining improved career status enabled employers, bosses and colleagues to have faith in the female graduates' skills and ability. The degree was seen as a 'passport' which showed the females as managers who had achieved a high level of competence. The EMBA qualification, therefore, appeared to make the female managers more confident about themselves and engendered in them a belief that they were capable at workplace. For many of the British female managers in this research, gaining the degree appeared to establish a virtuous circle of confidence and improved career status leading to salary increases, management promotions, increased career opportunities and personal reputation (see model 6). The blue colouring in the following model highlights the centrality of particular career benefits over others.

Model 6: Career benefits to female managers in the UK



Improved career status resulted from completing the EMBA was viewed as an important career benefit of the programme by the British and Taiwanese women. It was seen to be particularly critical by some of the younger women (British and Taiwanese), who perceived that their gender had been a barrier in being taken seriously at work organisations prior to gaining the EMBA qualification.

There are different perceptions on the acquisition of human and cultural capital between the British and Taiwanese women. The next sections will show the similarities and differences and discuss why they exist.

To summarize, the career benefits from acquiring human and cultural capital are:

- Knowledge
- Skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills)
- Confidence
- Improved career status, leading to career opportunities, salary increases, management promotions and personal reputation
- Other career benefits: personal satisfaction and career awareness

7.3 Choosing a good business school

There are similar views on choosing where to study for an EMBA programme and similar career benefits in terms of acquiring knowledge and studying skills in the EMBA classroom and gaining improved career status between the British and Taiwanese women.

All participants reported that selecting a good business school appeared very important.

"I chose the EMBA at the London Business School because they offered one of the top-ten MBA programmes in the world ... It's interesting that my company really valued the MBA when I finished it, and persuaded me to stay." (Sam, LBS – 37)

"I had to be in London. LBS was the best choice." (Kate, LBS – 35)

"This university has a reputation in terms of running the MBA programme in Taiwan. It was hard to get into it." (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Choosing a reputable business school to study for an EMBA was critical to every woman. There were no differences between older and younger women, among junior, middle and senior managers or between British and Taiwanese women. The geographical location of business schools appeared to be important to part-time students since they had to work alongside studying.

“The business school is near where I live. In general, Cheng Kung University has a good reputation across the country. I also needed to look after my own business at the same time. I was unlikely to choose a business school outside this area.” (Su Chang, Cheng Kung - 45)

“I have two nannies to look after my family, but I still want to spend some quality time with my kids after work. Choosing a decent business school near where I live and work was critical” (Hong, Sun Yat-sen - 44)

The reputation of the business school and its geographical location was critical in choosing a place to study the programme. Married women with families and their own businesses raised their concerns about the locations of the business schools. Having housemaids who could take care of domestic work and children is a popular way to reduce family duties in Taiwan. Hong had two housemaids to look after her family.

The participants from LBS and the participants from Sun Yat-sen and Cheng Chi reported that classmates tended to be older and more senior in the classroom.

“The average age of my class including male students was over 35. I was 31 when I started the EMBA. I was one of the youngest in class. I was also one of the youngest among the female students.” (Sam, LBS – 37)

“Two girls and I were the youngest in the class. I was in my early thirties. One male student was 55 so we had a huge age gap. Was it a good thing?” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

“Many students in my class were in their early forties. Some of them had been managing directors or general managers. For me, it was nice to mix with those senior people.” (Yang, Cheng Chi – 40)

The average age of women in Sam’s class was 35, which meant that London Business School attracted some older and senior women to study for an EMBA. However, this did not represent the whole population of women at the British business schools. The

female students of Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School tended to be younger, which was similar to those of National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan. National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University recruited females similar to the women from the London Business School in terms of managerial experience.

7.4 The differences in career benefits

There are different career benefits, in terms of acquiring cultural capital, between the British and Taiwanese women. The British women readily got salary increases and management promotions straight after the programme. The Taiwanese women did not experience immediate salary growth or promotions.

“The MBA made a difference for my salary in this new company. The MBA made a difference when I first came here. My salary went up by about 50 per cent when I came here.” (Alex, LBS -35)

Prior to her EMBA programme, Alex was a middle manager in a law firm in London. She was in her early thirties when she began studying the programme. The motivation for taking the programme was to seek career advancement in terms of getting a better paid job. Her salary increased when she finished her degree and acquired a new job in an investment bank.

“I got a pay increase when I moved to this department after the MBA so I found it rewarding.” (Helen, Cass – 32)

Helen was a junior manager in an investment bank in London. Before studying the EMBA, she found that her career progressed slowly. Changing jobs would help her to acquire more skills and opportunities to progress up. She still worked in the same bank upon graduation, but she got an offer to work in another department and was promoted to be a middle manager.

“I have already earned much money. I guess that I am the third best paid person here. They (the company) did not increase my salary at all when I finished the MBA. My boss took me to a nice dinner to celebrate though.” (Lin, Cheng Chi – 45)

Unlike the two British women who looked at the financial success at early career, Lin was a senior manager in a trading company. She was married with three children and was much older than many British women in the sample. The emotional support and recognition from her supervisor tended to be more important to her than an increase in salary at the stage of her career.

“No promotions. The company did not sponsor my study...They were happy that I chose to do a postgraduate degree in management in my free time.” (Jennifer, Cheng Kung -36)

Jennifer was younger than Lin and she did not feel that financial success was important to her. Neither woman complained about the lack of a salary increase upon graduation. There had been no expectation of one.

There are different views on acquiring confidence from the British and Taiwanese women. Gaining confidence appeared to be an important career benefit to the British women and, in particular, the younger women aged between 30 and 34. This was not considered important to the Taiwanese women aged between 35 and 45 (there were no Taiwanese women aged between 30 and 34 in the sample). Older and more experienced women had gained confidence through their longer corporate life than younger and less experienced women.

“Confidence was a benefit. After the MBA I knew where I could access information when I needed to, and the MBA gave me lots of insight into business and confidence.” (Nerys, Cranfield -32)

Nerys was single, in her late twenties; she was a junior manager at the time when she registered on the course. She met her husband in the classroom and they married following the completion of the programme. Beyond confidence she acquired from studying the programme, meeting her future husband and studying managerial skills were perceived as critical. When the interview with Nerys took place, her husband had just been appointed as the general manager of a company in York. Nerys was thinking of quitting the job and starting her own business near York so she would be able to live with her husband when he started his new post.

“I was not scared when I was challenged by my classmates or lecturers in the classroom. I used to work with very difficult people, some were men. I had the confidence to manage them properly” (Su Chang, Cheng Kung – 45)

“My confidence was increased but it was not because I did the MBA. I gained it in my previous working life. I have been in this industry for twelve years.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Unlike Nerys, Su Chang and Jenny were older, having more corporate experience in working life. Neither Taiwanese woman perceived that acquiring confidence was an important career benefit.

There are different views of gaining confidence between the women from the London Business School and those from Cranfield and Cass, which may be attributed to managerial experience.

“Many of us were in late thirties, and some were senior managers before the MBA. I did not feel that confidence was something we sought from MBA studies. I did have increased confidence but I wouldn’t say it was the biggest thing.” (Sam, LBS -37)

Sam was a middle manager prior to the EMBA and had worked for an international company for a number of years. She did not seek confidence from taking the programme, although she admitted that her confidence had increased.

“I was much older than many female students. Developing those skills (‘hard’ skills) on the course gave us a lot of confidence.” (Clarissa, Cass – 45)

Clarissa was very unusual among the British sample. She was the oldest British woman in this research. Her career history did not reflect the other women’s in terms of promotions and pay increases. She was married with two teenage girls. Her husband was disabled, living at home. Clarissa was the breadwinner so she could not afford to lose her job. However, she got made redundant twice while working in the publishing industry. Finally, she acquired the editor’s job in a small company through a former colleague. Her disrupted career may be the reason why she placed an emphasis on confidence.

“Again, I would say that I am more confident and less stressed. I am taking a senior role in the company. Confidence is what I expected to get from the MBA.” (Kirsty, Cranfield – 34)

Kirsty’s motivation for completing the degree was for her personal development. She was in her late twenties when she first started the course. She appreciated the confidence which she acquired from taking the EMBA. Gaining confidence was viewed as an important career benefit being in women’s late twenties and early thirties.

Her story is detailed in the case illustration in this chapter.

*“Confidence is definitely the biggest benefit for me – intangible, so difficult to quantify.”
(Nerys, Cranfield – 32)*

“I think that confidence was a benefit. I don’t think that I could do a better job without confidence.” (Jo, Cass -33)

Like Kirsty, Jo and Nerys were younger than the six women at London Business School. Both women began studying for an EMBA in their late twenties. Acquiring confidence was seen as critical being in the two women’s career development.

There were different expectations concerning peers on the EMBA programme across the women from the London Business School compared to those from Cranfield and Cass.

“I wanted to do an Executive MBA with people of similar age and business experience to myself.” (Colette, LBS -39)

Colette was a woman who had a strong career goal of becoming a leader one day. Finishing her first degree in chemistry at Oxford, she went on to complete a PhD in the field at the same college. She felt that learning from her peers with a similar age and business background would help her to fast track a managerial career.

“Cranfield had a strong faculty team to teach strategy. Besides that, I did not do much research on the profiles of students who attended the course.” (Dax, Cranfield – 34)

“I wanted to study finance so I chose Cass because its finance course was reputable ... I met some young students when I went to the Open Day. I did not care who would be there and how old they were.” (Sarah, Cass – 32)

Sarah and Dax were younger and had less corporate experience than Colette. Neither of them devoted much attention to who else would be studying the programme with them. They both chose their business schools based upon the reputation of the faculty members and the curriculum.

Interestingly, Ellen from National Cheng Kung University reported that the programme focused more on teaching students ‘hard’ skills than emphasizing people management issues and leadership.

“There was not much stuff about leadership and communication skills. I did my first degree on business studies. I felt a bit bored about the modules concentrating on finance and marketing; I had learnt them before.” (Ellen, Cheng Kung - 35)

The issue of the lack of time spent on ‘soft’ skills was raised by Ellen who was a junior manager in a pharmaceutical company. However, an older woman in the same class argued that her motivation for taking the programme was to learn leadership styles and various skills from fellow students because her class consisted of male and female students with considerable managerial skills.

“I didn’t expect that the faculty of this business school would teach me more leadership skills than my fellow classmates. The classmates had gained more hands-on management and business skills.” (Wang, Cheng Kung - 45)

Learning from the conversation with the head of the alumni office at National Cheng Kung University, the business school faced the challenges of the growing need for faculty members who could teach leadership and the need to offer an enhanced Executive MBA programme which would give students a broader perspective of theory and practice.

7.5 The similar career benefits

Everyone believed that they had acquired improved career status.

“It is a status thing. I am glad that I got it and it is on my CV now.” (Jenny, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

“I changed sectors so rewards are much reduced. My status has improved.” (Colette, LBS -39)

The acquisition of management knowledge and new business skills was perceived by most of the participants.

“The MBA has broadened my horizons and ways I am thinking about things and structures of business management...The MBA told me that I could do more for myself rather than waiting for an organisation to develop my career for me.” (Alex, LBS – 35)

“I am not sure whether it’s true – the MBA made me aware that there are things you didn’t realize that you could do before, but you actually can now. And there are areas which I probably wasn’t as good at before.” (Nerys, Cranfield - 32)

“I got a very good grounding of strategy and finance and also with a strong marketing and entrepreneurial profile.” (Shih Ning, Sun Yat-sen – 39)

Studying the course made women aware that they would get more than they anticipated from taking the EMBA.

“By the time I started doing my MBA I realized how much I did not know, which is why I wanted to study the MBA. It wouldn’t have crossed my mind a few years ago to do an MBA.” (Jo, Cass – 33)

“I realized that I did not know many areas if I wanted to be at the senior level in this company.” (Kate, LBS -35)

The women from the London Business School indicated that the EMBA offered them general management skills which helped them to move into senior management and to become leaders at workplace.

“When I went into the MBA, I wanted a broad range of areas to learn from. I did not want to be specialised to begin with. And I think that I knew the point that I wanted to be a general manager.” (Colette, LBS -39)

“Previously I struggled to be a specialist. I did not want to be a specialist. The MBA helped me to move into the general management. In terms of career benefits, I have got the EMBA degree which is widely recognized. The door is open to me where my career will be fast tracked in the organisation and the MBA offers me an opportunity to work in different countries and a platform which I could use. The MBA degree shows that I can manage a large amount of work and have a clear understanding of different business functions and can make right decisions.” (Sam, LBS – 37)

Acknowledged by British women, acquiring confidence was the most important career benefit from studying the EMBA. For some older and more senior women, the benefit was increased confidence.

The following tables (tables 10-12) show summaries of Anticipations, Development and Outcomes of developing confidence:

Table 9: Anticipations of acquiring confidence

Anticipations of acquiring confidence	London Business School: no women	Cranfield School of Management: four women (30-34, junior and middle managers before EMBA) and two women (35-38, middle managers before EMBA)	Cass Business School: five women (30-34, junior and middle managers before EMBA) and one woman (40-45, middle managers before EMBA)
Personal development		Four women: Kirsty, Nerys, Dax and Donna	Three women: Liz, Sarah, and Jo
Career advancement		Two women: Melissa and Wendy	Five women: Clarissa, Jo, Sarah, Helen and Sue
Improving 'soft' skills in terms of managing people in a corporate context		Three women: Nerys, Donna and Wendy	One woman: Clarissa

Table 10: Development of confidence

Development of confidence	London Business School: no women	Cranfield School of Management: four women (30-34, junior and middle managers before EMBA) and one woman (35-38, middle managers before EMBA)	Cass Business School: five women (30-34, junior and middle managers before EMBA) and one woman (40-45, middle managers before EMBA)
Studying 'hard' managerial skills		Three women: Melissa, Donna and Kirsty	Four women: Liz, Helen, Sue and Jo
Studying 'soft' skills		Three women: Melissa, Nerys and Kirsty	
Recognising confidence themselves through presentations and case studies		Four women: Donna, Kirsty, Wendy and Melissa	Five women: Clarissa, Jo, Sarah, Sue and Helen
Mixing with talented people			One woman: Sarah

Table 11: Outcomes of developing confidence

Outcomes of developing confidence	London Business School: two women (35-40, middle managers before EMBA)	Cranfield School of Management: four women (30-34, junior and middle managers before EMBA) and two women (35-38, middle managers before EMBA)	Cass Business School: five women (30-34, junior and middle managers before EMBA) and one woman (40-45, middle managers before EMBA)
Performing a good managerial job	One woman: Kate	Four women: Dax, Melissa, Kirsty and Nerys	Two women: Sarah and Liz
Coping with change and uncertainty			One woman: Clarissa
Gaining more respects in the workplace		Two women: Wendy and Nerys	Two women: Sarah and Sue
Dealing with senior people	One woman: Ali	Five women: Melissa, Wendy, Donna, Kirsty and Nerys	Three women: Jo, Helen and Clarissa

Previous work experience helped the women to understand easily and to learn effectively in the EMBA cohort. They could apply theories to practice. Older and senior women reported:

“The MBA changed my life completely. From my start-up point of view (starting the new business), I had a much wider picture of what I was looking for. I know that probably I will do another start-up. I have all the contacts. I have confidence. It is difficult to separate the MBA and my business because I did it at the same time. I can’t separate how much the MBA gave and how much the experience provided.” (Lesley, LBS – 38)

“I have had business and entrepreneurial experience...The MBA helps me to speak up in the boardroom and back it up with case studies or refer to books or papers or things like that. To speak up in the boardroom means speaking up clearly with back-up evidence. That’s a big benefit to me.” (Wang, Cheng Kung - 45)

Wang was one of the oldest women in the EMBA cohort at National Cheng Kung University. Unlike Lesley of London Business School, who comes from a well-off, middle-class family, Wang was born into a relatively poor family, the second of five brothers and sisters. Her father had a traditional belief that education was wasted on girls. Since her family could not afford to support her studies, Wang won a

scholarship to complete her secondary education. Her parents were uneducated so that they were unable to offer any advice about schooling and choice of subjects which she wanted to study in higher education. She was thrilled to take business studies when she received a scholarship from her chosen university. On campus, she met her future husband who was studying engineering. They married upon graduation. Soon after that, they decided to start their own business of producing plastic flowers. At the very beginning they did not have enough money to rent a place, so they used their living room as the workshop. In the mid-1990s, the business grew fast and they were able to purchase a factory and hire some workers to help. Following a number of acquisitions and mergers, Wang and her husband still held 40 per cent of the shares of their company. Both of them were executive board members. She enjoyed studying for the EMBA and formed a painting club (it was mentioned in chapter 5) inviting fellow EMBA friends to attend. In the interview, she felt that learning leadership styles from her peers in the classroom was an important career benefit. She did not anticipate how much lecturers or textbooks could teach her to conduct business. She was also willing to share her work experience with younger females, and help them to gain visibility in senior management.

Finally, Cindy emphasized the importance of gaining a degree which demonstrated a business identity similar to that of top management people.

“An MBA is an academic degree. It shows the employer that I can do the coursework while working in a corporate environment. People identify who has an MBA and who doesn’t even among very senior executives because it gives a wider perspective. When we get a senior executive who hasn’t done an MBA it can tell you something is not quite right.” (Cindy, Cheng Chi - 42)

7.6 Illustrative case studies

7.6.1 Kirsty’s story

Kirsty was a senior manager in a tobacco company in Bristol. At the age of 34, she was married with a son. She chose study for an EMBA at Cranfield and the company sponsored her study. She was living with her partner in Nottingham at the time of her study. Her partner was supportive in terms of giving her time and space to study, and he coped with her bad moods when she was under pressure or needed to let off steam. They married upon graduation.

One important reason for her to take the EMBA was that she was very frustrated at the amount of effort she was putting into work. This was reflected in very good feedback in appraisals, but her career was progressing more slowly than other similar-level colleagues. She asked to take the EMBA, which the company agreed she could do and that they would wholly fund her.

Kirsty reckoned that the programme would help her personal development in terms of gaining confidence and developing her strengths and minimizing her weaknesses. Besides that, she wanted to move in more intellectual circles and meet similar-minded people. As a result, she enjoyed her learning experience and was happy to acquire improved credibility within her professional workplace leading to more responsibility. The acquisition of new managerial skills was an important career benefit which would enable her to work in new business areas such as marketing and finance. She was impressed by the use of team-working as a development tool while on the course. She was particularly interested in psychology, systems thinking and finance. Finance was a surprise since she found it more of an art rather than simple number crunching. The other subjects she found interesting were organisational behaviour, managing personal effectiveness and strategy. As a result, she gained an understanding of how other business people worked.

Having gained confidence, Kirsty was ready to take on responsibility for issues she initially knew nothing about. She realized that she had the capacity to learn and then to use that information to perform. Prior to the EMBA programme, she would have felt more pressured especially by people more senior than her. Taking the EMBA enabled her to identify when other people were not confident in what they said and to assess the work quality of others. She was also able to better allocate peoples' skill sets to appropriate tasks.

Kirsty returned to work after 12 months' maternity leave and then her husband took one-year career break to look after their son. While having a little boy at home alongside a heavy workload as a senior manager in the company, she admitted that she had little time to participate in alumni networking activities. She knew that networking would be useful in due course; she kept in touch with her fellow EMBA friends via e-mail.

7.6.2 Jenny's story

Jenny was a business development manager (a middle manager) in a large IT company. She studied business administration for her first degree. She chose National Sun Yat-sen University as a place in which to take the EMBA programme. The company did not sponsor her study. At the age of 39, she was unmarried. She came from a solid middle-class family. Her parents were supportive of their children's education and career choice.

A major reason for taking the EMAB programme was that Jenny had become bored with her professional career working with computer experts each day; she felt she had become pigeonholed in one sector. Jenny was struggling to be able to work herself out of that sector, and to do something different. When she looked around at what her peer group was doing, the range of career prospects was limited. When she looked at what her manager was doing, she found that she didn't have a fulfilling career and didn't want to stay in the IT industry. The motivating factor to take the programme was to develop skills through which another employer would see that she had transferable skills. In addition she wanted to be a well-rounded manager; for example, she had not worked in finance before. Jenny anticipated that the Executive MBA would give her much more general management experience which would help her to perform the role of business development manager well.

Prior to the EMBA programme, Jenny knew from the Open Day, organised by National Sun Yat-sen University, that people management would be a crucial part of the programme. She had managed people and had handled difficult situations before. Following the completion of her EMBA, she took up a new, large team. Taking the EMBA gave her a general framework and made her think differently, and enabled her eventually to manage the large team. Jenny valued the 'soft' skills which she got from taking the programme. Moreover, she indicated that organising the restaurant project with two female students gave her a wider perspective on business and management issues. Learning new skills beyond her own business areas fulfilled the need to advance her career in a different sector. She stressed that the EMBA programme run by National Sun Yat-sen University was fantastic. Jenny got the skills which she anticipated and the networks with senior business people; as a result, she gained visibility in senior management and appreciated the network outcome in terms of acquiring professional support, exchanging information and sharing knowledge.

7.7 Same Executive MBA programme, different experiences

Both British and Taiwanese women valued the degree of Executive MBA, but they experienced it differently. There are a number of differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese women. First, the Taiwanese women did not immediately get management promotions and did not experience any significant salary growth following the completion of the EMBA programme. The majority of the British women experienced salary increases and a number of management promotions, and these expectations were set up by British employers in advance of sponsorship (promotions or pay increases). Nonetheless, women acknowledged that they had gained knowledge and skills on the programme. In the illustrative case studies (see sections 7.6.1 and 7.6.2), both Jenny and Kirsty valued the experience of taking the programme and they indicated the acquisition of knowledge and skills as a result of completing the EMBA.

Secondly, gaining confidence was an important career benefit which the British women (except the four women from LBS) gained from taking the EMBA. Acquiring confidence was not viewed as critical by the Taiwanese women since they were more mature and had greater work experience in corporate life. Nonetheless, women perceived that gaining confidence was attributable to the acquisition of knowledge and the development of 'hard' and 'soft' skills (see illustrative case study section 7.6.1), in addition to gaining cultural and social capital.

Thirdly, the British women reported that improved career status was a career benefit leading to increased career opportunities, salary increases, management promotions and personal reputation. The Taiwanese women acquired improved career status leading to personal reputation and potential career opportunities, but they did not get immediate salary increases or management promotions. They anticipated that they would benefit from the EMBA on their CVs while seeking a higher management position. Nonetheless, everyone believed that the EMBA programme, offered by leading business schools, was globally recognized and widely accepted by employers.

Finally, the acquisition of social capital (mentioned in chapter six) was the most important career benefit to the Taiwanese women in career management and development. Many British women were sponsored by their employers. They had to work for the employers for an agreed length of time upon graduation. These women were not able to leverage their networks to make a career change, yet they valued the networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends.

7.8 Why did they have different experiences?

Higher education is very critical for the progression of Taiwanese women in managerial careers (Tang, 1992; Adler, 1993). Although there are slightly more men than women entering MBA programmes, women are increasingly entering fields of business and management study that are relevant to senior managerial roles in due course. Female managers' educational profile is similar to that of male managers in Taiwan (Cheng and Liao, 1994). In the UK, female managers tend to be younger than their male counterparts (Coe, 1992; Metcalf and West, 1991). Interestingly, British female managers are generally more highly educated than men at similar levels (Venter, 2002).

Marriage is a factor that has been shown to have an important impact on women's labour force participation rate in the UK. Married women are less likely than single women to be in paid employment and are also less likely to increase their participation in senior management (Omar and Davidson, 2001; Venter, 2002). This explains why some female managers in the British sample decided to postpone marriage and childbirth prior to the Executive MBA. The so-called 'glass ceiling' exists particularly for working women with children (Davidson and Cooper, 1984; Omar and Davidson, 2001). Culturally, British women often wish to concentrate fully on their role as a mother, at least initially, and this holds them back in their managerial careers.

Maternity leave in the UK is longer than in Taiwan and allows more flexibility and rights for the working women concerned. In the illustrative case study (section 7.6.1), Kirsty married her husband and had a baby son after completing the programme. Her coping strategy was to return to work after 12 months' maternity leave. In Taiwan, there is greater incentive to return within four weeks to the same post and the same working hours as prior to the childbirth. This is a way of ensuring an uninterrupted job at the level gained and continued career progression. This may also be reflective of the long-term perspective prevalent in Chinese culture (Venter, 2002). As was mentioned in the previous chapter, housemaids or an extended family (grandparents) share the domestic work and childcare in Taiwan. Women do not usually experience career breaks. They can continue to progress with a full-time career alongside a family (see illustrative case study section 6.4.3).

Legally, a number of equal opportunity laws have been introduced and implemented in recent years. Yet it is not clear whether they have worked effectively for women's career development in Taiwan (Chou, Chen, Fosh and Foster, 2009). Approved in

2001, the Gender Equality in Employment Law supported previous legislation on women's rights and added new acts (Laws and Regulations Database of ROC, 2002). The Sexual Harassment Prevention Act, which was introduced in 2006, made sexual harassment a crime (Taipei Times, 2006). The implementation of the Gender Equality in Employment Law has been criticised although it was an important milestone in the development of rights for Taiwanese women. For example, few people have applied for the unpaid parental leave which the law offers (Lin and Chou, 2007).

The United Kingdom is one of the world's most globalised countries. Its GDP per capita was US\$45,575 in 2007 (Economy of the United Kingdom, 2009). Women's participation in the labor market accounts for 50 per cent and it is the highest among European countries (Gannon, 2004; European Commission, 2008). There is no legal requirement to disclose information on female employment in the UK, yet reporting on performance on workplace gender issues among British companies has improved considerably over the last decade (Grosser, Adams and Moon, 2008). The Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 and The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 protect equality of the sexes. In 2005 the Sex Discrimination Act was extended into the Employment Equality (Sex Discrimination) Regulations in order to comply with the European Community's Equal Treatment Directive. These Regulations have attempted to define sexual harassment as any conduct of a sexual nature that is unwanted by the recipient, including verbal, non-verbal and physical behaviours (About Equal Opportunities, 2009).

Revisiting the interview data, only a few women mentioned gender discrimination in their work organisations. No one made any references to the importance of organisational equal opportunities' policies and practices for their careers. None of the female participants talked about whether the legal framework and government policies for equal opportunities in Taiwan and the UK had any impact on their careers. Therefore I have inferred that they have not had a significant impact on the careers of my interviewees.

There is new evidence that many more Taiwanese women choose to study for an Executive MBA than the British women. More female managers in Taiwan will be likely to break into executive jobs than their counterparts in the UK. To summarize, this research helped in extending an understanding of why British and Taiwanese women took an EMBA programme at their early and mid-career. It uncovered how women leverage an EMBA to develop themselves as managers in terms of examining

the acquisition of human, social and cultural capital; and how female managers exploited the value of career capital in order to promote better understanding between British and Taiwanese business schools. The findings endorsed the importance of cultural context (*Guanxi* and Confucianism) in assessing the social capital of an EMBA in Taiwan.

Additionally, it is important to note that studying cross-cultural differences must include a conservative estimate that between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of basic values stem from culture (Hofstede, 2001). Other factors of diversity, such as age and socioeconomic status, account for the variance in values and attitudes, but clearly culture is critical (Gannon, 2004). This research has identified that the cultural factors, such as individualism in the UK and collectivism in Taiwan, have an impact on the differences in career benefits which women have gained from MBA studies.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

This chapter relates the findings of the research to the perspective of career capital and the literature on women and their career benefits from taking an MBA programme. It begins by summarizing the main findings and then discussing the contributions which the findings make to theory and practice. Reflections on personal learning are presented and the limitations of this research are discussed. Suggestions for future research are proposed, building on the findings of this cross-cultural study.

8.1 A summary of the research findings

The aim of this research is to uncover the career benefits which female graduates have gained from studying an Executive MBA programme in the UK and Taiwan and to answer the following questions:

- How do women perceive the acquisition of human capital?
- How do women perceive the acquisition of social capital?
- How do women perceive the acquisition of cultural capital?
- Are there differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese samples and, if so, are they attributable to culture and the characteristics of the individuals, namely, age differences, managerial experiences and family structures?

Career capital is defined in this thesis as:

- human capital, in terms of knowledge, skills and confidence;
- social capital, in terms of networks with alumni, peers, faculty and friends;
- cultural capital, in terms of improved career status leading to increased salary, management promotions, increased career opportunities and personal reputation.

This study has shown that there are differences in career benefits among British and Taiwanese women in three different age groups:

- Junior and middle managers (30-34 years old) focus on the acquisition of human and cultural capital and, in particular, on growth in confidence and salary as well as career advancement;

- Middle and senior managers (35-40 years old) concentrate more on the acquisition of social capital than human and cultural capital;
- Senior managers (41-45 years old) benefit from the acquisition of social capital in terms of the networks with alumni, faculty, peers and friends.

There are similarities and differences in career benefits among women from six business schools. The female managers from London Business School, National Cheng Chi University and National Sun Yat-sen University as well as the two older women from National Cheng Kung University are more senior, in terms of managerial experiences, than those at the other three business schools. The focus of their career benefits is on the acquisition of social capital. However, there are differences in terms of reporting social capital (networks) among these women:

- Female managers from National Cheng Chi University, National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Kung University report career benefits from creating, sustaining and developing networks as gaining visibility in senior management, obtaining career advice, seeking career opportunities, exchanging information, sharing knowledge, acquiring sponsors, a source of learning, seeking professional support and other commercial benefits such as gaining a deeper understanding of customers;
- Female managers from the London Business School report career benefits from networking in terms of management promotions, salary increases and increased career opportunities.

The female managers from Cranfield School of Management, Cass Business School and National Cheng Kung University (the four younger women) have less managerial experience than those at the other three business schools. The focus of their career benefits is on the acquisition of human and cultural capital. However, there are differences in career benefits in terms of reporting the acquisition of human and cultural capital:

- Female managers from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School report their career benefits as being growth in confidence which leads to them being more effective and efficient as managers and being able to cope with change and uncertainty;

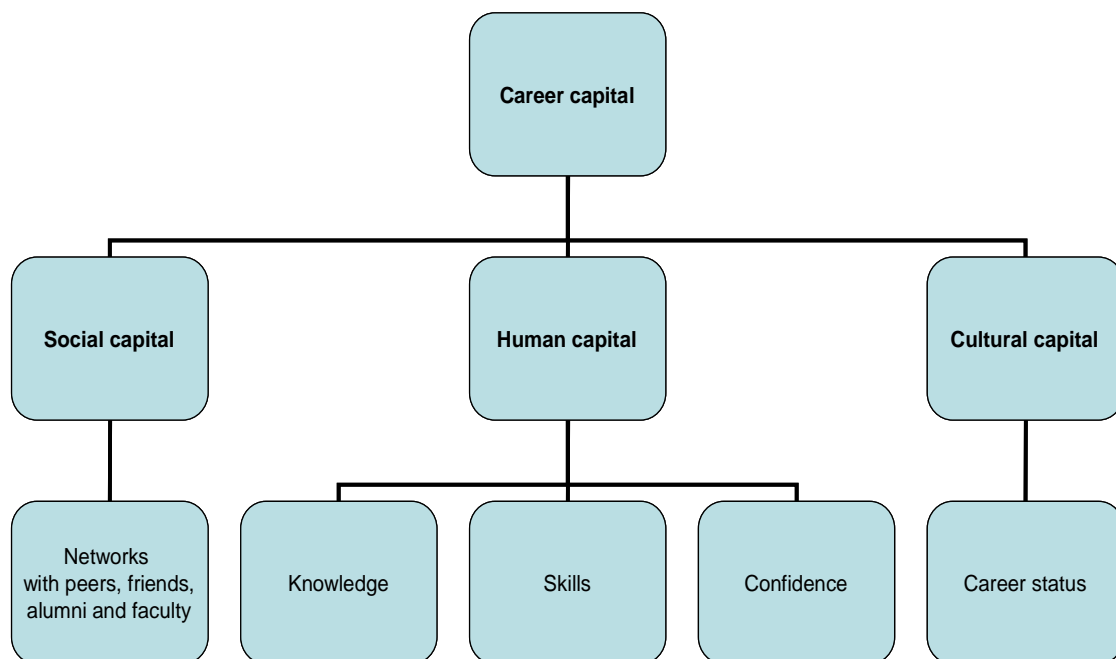
- Female managers from the National Cheng Kung University (the four younger women) report their career benefits as being growth in confidence and development of managerial skills.

To summarize, all the women report the acquisition of career capital as a result of completing an Executive MBA programme at early and mid-career stages. The differences in career benefits between the British and Taiwanese women can be explained in terms of the cultural backgrounds (British and Taiwanese) and the characteristics of each individual in terms of age and managerial experience.

8.2 Contributions of the research to literature

The findings of this research have been summarized and discussed in chapters five, six and seven. In terms of theoretical contribution, this research has attempted to adopt the perspective of career capital by redefining the concepts of human, social and cultural capital (see figure 7) and reorganizing the dimensions within the three concepts. Additionally, the research offers empirical evidence to add to the current literature on women and their career benefits from taking an MBA by specifically integrating career stage and cultural background into the study. Table 13 shows a brief summary of contributions to theory and practice.

Figure 7: Career-capital model of this research



Sources: Sturges, Simpson and Altman (2003) and Baruch, Bell and Gray (2005)

Table 12: Contributions to theory and practice

Domain of contribution	Extent of contribution		
	What has been Confirmed/contradicted?	What has been extended?	What is brand new?
Theoretical knowledge	Women perceive the career benefits from taking an MBA in the form of human capital (<i>knowing-how</i> and <i>knowing-why</i> competencies) and social capital (<i>knowing-whom</i> competencies)	Previous research of the career benefits has not addressed that the factors of career stage and culture influence the career outcomes. This study looks at women at two career stages and from two contrasting cultures. The career-capital model is extended and it includes three concepts of human, social and cultural capital.	
Sampling strategy		A stratified sample was taken from female Executive MBA graduates at three business schools in the UK and Taiwan respectively in terms of different percentages of female students.	
Empirical evidence	Female MBA graduates acquire human capital in the form of knowledge, skills and confidence. Female MBA graduates acquire social capital in the form of networks.	Women acquire cultural capital in the form of improved career status; the differences in career benefits are related to their age, managerial experience and cultural factors. Confidence is analyzed in a deep way by identifying motivation for confidence, how it was developed & outcomes of gaining confidence; acquiring networks is analyzed by anticipation from creating networks, sustaining networks & outcomes from developing networks.	This research fills a gap in the research of female MBA students in Taiwan.
Implications for practitioners	This research develops a rich understanding for business schools which aim to attract more female students across the globe.		

8.2.1 Contribution to the perspective of career capital

There are different definitions of career capital in the existing research, some of which have limitations. The model which was adopted by Sturges and her associates (2003) is problematic since it does not incorporate external career success such as pay and promotions. Baruch and his associates (2005) examined men's and women's career outcomes from taking an MBA in an American business school by using the theoretical framework of five types of human capital: scholastic capital (knowledge), social capital (networks), cultural capital (status), inner-value capital (confidence) and market-value capital (pay increases). I disagree with Baruch's merging of social and cultural capital within the concept of human capital. The concept of social capital does not belong to human capital and these two concepts have been separated by other scholars (e.g. Sturges and Simpson) in the research on MBA graduates' career outcomes. This study shows the acquisition of networks at women's mid-career stage and social capital is an important part of career capital. Cultural capital is defined as improved career status; its career benefits (e.g. salary and promotions) must be discussed separately from human and social capital. Hence the concepts of human, social and cultural capital are positioned independently within the framework of career capital in my thesis.

This research adopts a career-capital perspective, consisting of the three concepts of human, social and cultural capital. Human capital is captured by the dimension of knowledge acquired from studying an MBA programme, the dimension of skills ('hard' and 'soft' skills) which are essential for managers wishing to become effective and efficient and the dimension of confidence which helps graduates to improve their ability to perform a good managerial job (Sturges et al., 2003; Simpson et al., 2004, 2005). Confidence is analyzed in a deep way by identifying women's motivation for gaining confidence, how it was developed on the programme and the outcomes from developing confidence.

In terms of cultural capital, education can help individuals to climb the career ladder and business qualifications are critical in the career advancement of working managers. An MBA degree has developed a reputation for helping graduates to improve their career status, leading to increased salary, management promotions, improved career opportunities and personal reputation. Previously, "personal reputation" was analysed within the concept of social capital (Rader and Burt, 1996; Jones and DeFillippi, 1996) and "salary increases" was examined within the concept of human capital (Baruch et al., 2005). This research shows that female graduates' personal

reputation is gained from studying for an MBA (a time-consuming, challenging programme in business and management) at a reputable business school. As a result, the women's career status has significantly improved. Salary increases and management promotions are the visible outcomes of improved career status in women's working life. Thus, I argue that "personal reputation", "salary increases" and "management promotions" are dimensions of "career status" and they have been analysed within the concept of cultural capital.

In terms of social capital, the "old boys" network is changing such that female managers are starting to construct new, crucial networks. Development of networks, through, for example, participation in alumni associations (networking with alumni) and in social activities (networking with friends, peers and faculty), has been encouraged by business schools. In this study, networks have been discussed in terms of motivation for creating networks, sustaining networks and the outcomes from developing networks. There are a number of career benefits which accrue from the acquisition of networks (e.g. seeking professional support, exchanging information and sharing knowledge).

This doctoral research has attempted to examine women's career benefits by delineating human, social and cultural capital within the career-capital model. Human capital consists of knowledge, skills and confidence which graduates have gained from taking the MBA. Social capital is captured by networks with peers, alumni, friends and faculty. Cultural capital is developed through the value which society places on symbols of prestige and is defined as improved career status. The research has attempted to clarify the perspective of career capital via redefinition of the three concepts of human, social and cultural capital. Additionally, it has reorganized the dimensions more coherently within each concept.

8.2.2 Contribution to the literature on women and their career benefits from taking an Executive MBA

This research has added knowledge to the existing literature on women and their career benefits from taking an Executive MBA programme. It has deepened the understanding of why female managers choose to study the Executive MBA programme, how they leverage the qualification to develop their managerial careers and which career benefits are gained.

In the 1990s research by Simpson (1995, 1998), Cox and Harquail (1991) and Schneer and Reitman (1994) reported largely on salary increases and promotions from taking an MBA programme. The results of this early research offered little evidence of the acquisition of social capital in terms of valuable networks for MBA graduates. In the last few years, there has been renewed interest in the importance of social capital to working managers (Baruch and Peiperl, 2000; Hay and Hodgkinson, 2006). Yet findings of recent empirical studies on women and their career benefits from taking an MBA (Sturges et al., 2003; Simpson et al., 2005) have still focused on the acquisition of human capital (*knowing-how* and *knowing-why* career competencies). The findings of this research demonstrate the importance of social capital (*knowing-whom* career competencies) as a result of completing an MBA, particularly for the Taiwanese women.

The aim of this doctoral study is to further the research of Sturges and her associates' in 2003 by presenting evidence relating to female managers' career benefits from studying an Executive MBA in the UK and Taiwan. Sturges concluded in her work that maybe the culture of the business schools and the different career stages of the graduates had an impact on the acquisition of networks. However, these two factors have not been taken up in any further studies. This research seeks to identify the career outcomes for women at early and mid-career stages.

In the British sample, women (junior and middle managers) from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School reported similar career benefits to those of Sturges and her colleagues (2003) and Simpson and her associates (2005). Women from London Business School (middle and senior managers) focused on the acquisition of social capital in terms of networks. In the Taiwanese sample, junior and middle managers from National Cheng Kung University (four younger women) shared their perspectives on career benefits with the women from the Cranfield School of Management and the Cass Business School. In contrast, other women (middle and senior managers) from the Taiwanese business schools reported that the acquisition of social capital was the most important career benefit from completing the programme. These Taiwanese women reported more social capital benefits than the women from the London Business School. I, therefore, argue that age and managerial experience may have an impact on the career benefits which female graduates have gained from MBA studies.

Previous research has not devoted much attention to the cultural factors (e.g. individualism in the Western societies) which influence men's and women's perspectives on the creation of social capital. This research shows that cultural backgrounds (individualism versus collectivism) played an important role in the British and Taiwanese women's career development. British females emphasized individual norms and values and they sought personal development from studying an MBA while Taiwanese women concentrated on collective benefits and aimed to maintain and develop networks that had been created in the MBA cohort. To summarize, the cultural context (collectivism in Taiwan versus individualism in the UK) and the characteristics of the individuals (age differences and managerial experiences) together influenced the kinds of career-capital benefits that the women have gained from completing an MBA.

This research has attempted to add to the knowledge about career stages in women's career development. It has shaped an understanding of how British and Taiwanese women develop managerial careers in their thirties and forties, and which career benefits are gained. Women at early career stage, aged between 30 and 34, have focused on acquiring human and cultural capital and, in particular, on growth in confidence, salary and career advancement. Women in mid-career stage, aged between 35 and 40, have concentrated more on acquiring social capital than human and cultural capital. Women at mid-career stage, aged between 41 and 45, have benefited from acquiring social capital, contributing more career capital to the Executive MBA cohort than younger managers. The differences, found between the two groups (aged 35-40 and aged 41-45) of women at mid-career in this research, argue the case for redefining the traditional delineation of women's mid-career stage (aged between 35 and 45). Clearly more research is called for to substantiate this position.

Taiwanese women were found to experience uninterrupted careers since reasonable domestic help and an extended family played a huge part at their mid-career. The findings from the Taiwanese sample challenge the research by O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) and Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) that women at mid-career have to juggle family demands with their work commitments (both studies were based upon American samples). While British women try hard to achieve their career success prior to marriage and parenthood and to break the so-called 'glass ceiling', Taiwanese females enjoy the career benefits from studying an Executive MBA and experience uninterrupted careers alongside a family.

There has been no comparative research conducted on the career benefits of female Executive MBA graduates between the East and the West. This study has attempted to add to the knowledge about cross-cultural literature on female managers who have studied for an Executive MBA. The research showed that 89 per cent of the Taiwanese female participants paid their full fees themselves. Younger women (junior and middle managers, 35-40 years old) were willing to invest time, money and dedication in taking the Executive MBA programme in order to acquire career capital and to perform a good managerial job. Older women (senior managers, 41-45 years old) brought career capital to the Executive MBA cohort. They enjoyed learning alongside younger females and male peers and gaining social capital in the process.

This research has also demonstrated how national cultural values have an impact on the career outcomes of taking an MBA. Confucians believe that individuals have roles that they must fulfill but, in doing so, their individualism can enlarge and enrich them for the greater good of the family and kinship group (Hofstede, 2001; Gannon, 2004). From the Chinese perspective, people exist only in relationship to others (Chen, 2001). Taiwan is an interesting example of successful development in terms of its rapid economic growth. It was established as a separate country (it is not recognized by the United Nations) after World War II when the Communists drove Chiang Kai-shek and his followers out of China. Taiwan's rulers believed that the most important resource of Taiwan was the Confucian dynamic of its people (Chen, Ko and Lawler, 2003) in terms of collective norms and values, and laws were established that fostered entrepreneurship. Taiwanese businesses are generally small and family-dominated (Cheng and Liao, 1994), and they have been so successful that the country is now one of the richest in the world (Gannon, 2004). This doctoral study has shown how female Executive MBA graduates benefit from a perspective of collectivism in the classroom.

To summarise, this research aims to investigate women's career outcomes from taking an Executive MBA. It has attempted to add to the knowledge about career capital and the literature of women's career benefits from an MBA. Adopting a qualitative interview method in comparison to the quantitative method used in most previous studies, this research has deepened our knowledge of the career benefits enjoyed by female MBA graduates in the UK and Taiwan by specifically integrating career stage (early and mid-career) and cultural background (British and Taiwanese) into the study.

The emphasis on social capital benefits described by the Taiwanese participants can be explained in terms of the collective values emphasized in Chinese culture and it reflects the drivers of Taiwanese women managers' mid-career. The individualistic values in the UK and the early career stage of most of the British participants explain the importance attributed to the human and cultural capital benefits. Clearly, career stage helps to explain differences in findings on career benefits between the British and Taiwanese women. Only the women in the early career stage (aged between 30 and 34) focused on the acquisition of human and cultural capital. Confidence can be attributed to age. The Taiwanese participants were older, thus more experienced and confidence is less likely to be an issue. This is an important finding since previous research in the West on women's benefits from taking an MBA have largely focused on confidence as a primary career benefit. In this study, most of the women (aged between 35 and 45) focused on the importance of social capital as a career benefit from taking an MBA. Interestingly, while I argued earlier that culture may partly explain this result for Taiwanese participants, apparently career stage is also a factor since the participants from London Business School who were between 35 and 40 years also emphasized the importance of gaining social capital.

8.3 Contribution to sampling strategy

The weakness of much previous research on full-time MBA graduates and their career outcomes has been the use of single samples. One business school in one region cannot represent the whole population of MBA graduates in one country. The adoption of the stratified sample and careful selection of business schools have shown the different profiles of the female students at six chosen business schools. Previously, it was assumed that the profile of the MBA students was the same at all business schools. This research challenges such an assumption.

Looking at the British sample, the women from London Business School were slightly more senior in terms of managerial experiences than those from Cranfield School of Management and Cass Business School. They acquired similar career benefits to the senior women from National Sun Yat-sen University and National Cheng Chi University in Taiwan. Examining the Taiwanese sample, the four women from National Cheng Kung University were younger and less senior in terms of managerial experience than those from the National Sun Yat-sen University and the National Cheng Chi University. They gained similar career benefits to the junior and middle managers from the Cranfield School of Management and the Cass Business School. The findings derived from a stratified sample, taken from six business schools (based

upon different proportions of female students on the Executive MBA programmes), show the differences in career benefits which women have acquired from studying an MBA at two different geographical locations (Taiwan and UK).

Management researchers (Sinclair, 1995, 1997, 2000; Smith, 1997; Simpson, 2006) argue that the masculinity of the MBA programme has influenced the graduates' experience of it. Various indicators of masculinity are the percentage of women on the MBA programme, the percentage of female faculty members, the gendering of the teaching materials and the gendered way that the programme is delivered. This thesis does not attempt to study the masculinity of the MBA programme. However, the sample of business schools in the UK and Taiwan was selected to illustrate programmes with varying percentages of female students. In the data analysis no trends were evident to link career benefits to percentage of females on the programme, hence such results are not presented in this thesis.

8.4 Contribution to practice

Business schools have stressed the career benefits from taking their MBA programmes in terms of the acquisition of human capital such as skills and cultural capital such as salary increases. In the competitive, global environment, when recruiting male and female students, business schools must realize and emphasize how the MBA can help graduates to accumulate other kinds of career capital, in the form of social capital.

There are increasingly significant numbers of Indian and Chinese students who have enrolled on MBA studies in the UK. According to the administrative office at Cranfield School of Management, Indian students accounted for 26 per cent of the MBA programme in the year of 2008-9. A focus on acquiring networks could offer a valuable source of perceived competitive advantage in an increasingly global market for the delivery of MBA programmes at British business schools. If the findings from the Taiwanese sample can be generalized to the Chinese population (people in China, Hong Kong and Singapore), acquiring networks will be a key attraction for Chinese students to consider when they apply to business schools in the UK. Female managers have traditionally been seen to have less social capital than male managers. The Executive MBA programme is able to offer female graduates an effective way of leveling the playing field with males in terms of networking activities.

8.5 Personal learning

Completing this doctoral research has proved to be a journey of personal development. I have been grateful for the supervision offered by the International Centre of Women Leaders at Cranfield School of Management and my PhD supervisor's constructive criticism on this cross-cultural study. I cannot remember how many times I have revised the drafts of my thesis. Nevertheless, revision has proved to be useful and has helped me to enhance the quality of this research. Writing this section offers an opportunity to reflect on my memories of the four-year journey.

Quarterly meetings organized by the International Centre of Women Leaders and the doctoral colloquium scheduled by the research office has created a platform to present the findings of my research and to be criticized by faculty and peers. Discussions at length with my supervisor every other week and regular meetings with other members of faculty (e.g. Val Singh and Noeleen Doherty) enabled me to conduct a fuller literature review and to refine the analytical framework better. Networking with management researchers across the world helped in improving my research skills. Diana Bilimoria from the Case Western Business School gave her opinions on the design of my interview questions when she visited Cranfield.

The research adopted a qualitative semi-structured interview method. Qualitative data records are messy and large. Beginning the data analysis by reviewing what was already known on the subject of the career-benefit research has proved to be a well-established practice. It has helped me to comprehend the implications of relevant theories (e.g. career capital, women's career stages, individualism and collectivism) for my research topic and useful methods which other management researchers (e.g. Sturges, Simpson and Baruch) have adopted to investigate the similar topic.

Working with insights from existing literature also proved to be a good start to developing my skills using NVivo software. Coding notes which I made while reading journal articles and books facilitated the development of my analytical framework. It provided a basis for making comparisons with what I have found from my own interview data. The contributions made to the career-capital theory and the current literature on women and their career benefits were gradually worked out.

Finally, working with experienced British researchers, I have enjoyed my learning experience of conducting qualitative research at Cranfield School of Management. Moreover, doctoral students were encouraged to submit research papers to

international conferences and academic journals. The research office was supportive in terms of funding our participation in various workshops and training courses across the UK. Following the start of this doctoral study, my PhD supervisor said that the research subject was interesting and suggested I submit a research proposal to the Graduate Management Admission Council in the US. In 2006 I won a doctoral student fellowship which paid some of my fees.

8.6 Limitations of this research

The research has developed knowledge about how British and Taiwanese women perceive the career benefits from taking an Executive MBA programme at their early and mid-career stages. Yet there are some limitations which will be discussed in this section.

8.6.1 Methodology

Most of the limitations relate to the method adopted in the research. The interviewees were asked to report their managerial status by identifying themselves as junior, middle and senior managers in work organizations. Self-reporting such data was clearly subjective.

In this research, there were no Taiwanese women aged between 30 and 34 (early career stage), therefore it was impossible to make cross-cultural comparisons. There was only one British woman (middle manager) aged between 41 and 45 (late in her mid-career stage), thus again it was difficult to draw a comparison. The highest proportion of female students on the MBA programme in the Taiwanese sample was 42 per cent whereas the highest percentage of women in the British sample was 28 per cent. Again, such differences limited comparisons.

The size of sample was small due to the qualitative nature of this research and this limited the generalisability of the findings.

8.6.2 Personal bias

Being a female management researcher entailed the existence of potential personal bias when interviewing women. The complexities of the relationship between the researcher and the female interviewees may have had an impact on the interview data gained. Data analysis may also have been influenced due to the subjectivity involved in the process. As a woman in my thirties having completed an Executive MBA, I was similar in terms of my educational background to many of the female graduates

whom I interviewed in the UK and Taiwan. Many of these women had built a similar lifestyle rather to my own and moved in similar social circles. They were very keen to talk about how their own career history compared with mine and to pinpoint the career benefits which I could comprehend. A degree of similarity between the research subject and my own experience may have caused a personal bias when analysing the interview data. A male researcher at Cranfield School of Management read some of the chapters which contained the findings while I was writing and he offered his opinions on data analysis which helped to control my bias. Likewise, my supervisor ensured that I carried out the data analysis with rigor.

8.7 Future research

This research has made contributions to the perspective of career capital and the literature on women and their career benefits from studying an Executive MBA programme in the UK and Taiwan. To date much has been written about MBA graduates' career outcomes in the UK and the US and many important gender differences have been found in the existing research on men's and women's career benefits in English-speaking countries. Further research on Taiwanese samples needs to include male graduates and to find out how men define their career success and how they perceive the acquisition of career capital from taking an MBA. Undertaking further research on male graduates in Taiwan will help us to ascertain which career benefits men gain and whether they are similar to their female peers.

The findings of the research have triggered renewed interest in the acquisition of social capital as a result of completing an MBA. Further studies may include female MBA graduates from business schools in Hong Kong and Singapore since the percentages of women on the Executive MBA programmes are as high as in Taiwan. According to Bickerstaffe (2008) and the Financial Times (2008), women who have embarked upon the MBA programme in Hong Kong and Singapore have profiles similar to the Taiwanese women in terms of average age and managerial experience. It will be intriguing to discover what career benefits those women have gained. It will be useful to see how the women leverage an MBA degree and develop their managerial careers in Hong Kong and Singapore. It will also be useful to extend the sample beyond Hong Kong and Singapore to other Asian countries like India, where many students choose to take MBA studies. This will offer a broader understanding of the needs of Asian students who enroll on global programmes in the UK.

Finally, future studies are needed to further the research on the differences in career benefits at the two phases (35-40 years old and 41-45 years old) of women's mid-career stage, as well as the expansion and development of the links among the three concepts of career capital.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: an e-mail to each female participant

Dear XXXX,

Re: Doctoral research on the career benefits of an MBA for British and Taiwanese women managers

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for my doctoral research project. This research looks at a sample of corporate female Executive MBA graduates in the UK and Taiwan and aims to uncover the career benefits which women have gained from taking the programme at early and mid-career. The female graduates from Cranfield School of Management, Cass Business School, London Business School, National Sun Yat-sen University, National Cheng Chi University and National Cheng Kung University are chosen to participate in the semi-structured interviews. Each interview consists of five open questions (see below) and will take about an hour and a half.

1. Tell me about your career.
2. Before the Executive MBA, how did you think that the programme could help you to develop your career?
3. What are the career benefits which have gained from taking the programme?
4. How have you been using the Executive MBA to advance your career?
5. How is your career likely to develop?

I hope that you will find the interview interesting and helpful, in which it allows you to reflect on the career benefits which accrue from studying the Executive MBA.

I look forward to meeting you.

Best wishes,
Aurora Chen

Appendix B: e-mails between the researcher and alumni offices

RE: A mid-career study of female EMBA graduates

Page 1 of 1

Turner, Emma (Library)

From: CHEN, AURORA
Sent: 26 January 2007 17:53
To: Turner, Emma (Library)
Subject: FW: A mid-career study of female EMBA graduates

From: Tina Peswani [mailto:tpeswani@london.edu]
Sent: Wed 17/01/2007 10:56
To: CHEN, AURORA
Subject: RE: A mid-career study of female EMBA graduates

Dear Aurora

I have forwarded your request onto the School's External relations department, who should be in contact with you in due course. In the meantime, if you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards


Tina Peswani
Marketing Assistant
Sloan & Executive MBA
Programmes Office
London Business School
Regent's Park
London NW1 4SA
United Kingdom

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Direct line: +44 (0)20 7000 7475
Fax: +44 (0)20 7000 7456

Email: tpeswani@london.edu

London experience.
World impact.

 You replied on 12/01/2007 13:31.

CHEN, AURORA

From: Sommerlad, Tom [T.Sommerlad@city.ac.uk] **Sent:** Fri 12/01/2007 13:12
To: CHEN, AURORA
Cc:
Subject: RE: A mid-career study of female EMBA graduates in Cass
Attachments:

Hello Aurora,

It is nice to hear from you again.
I confirm that I will be happy to forward correspondence from yourself to various Cass EMBA alumni.

Talk to you soon.

Best Regards,

Tom Sommerlad
MBA Admissions
Cass Business School
106 Bunhill Row
London EC1Y 8TZ

Tel: 0207 040 8608
Fax: 0207 040 8898

-----Original Message-----

From: CHEN, AURORA [mailto:aurora.chen.phd.04@Cranfield.ac.uk]
Sent: 09 January 2007 09:25
To: Sommerlad, Tom
Subject: A mid-career study of female EMBA graduates in Cass

Dear Tom

Happy New Year to you.

Thank you for your help to my pilot study in 2006. I will start conducting my main PhD study by interviewing female Executive MBA graduates from CASS in 2004. I would be grateful if you could kindly distribute my message with my contact e-mail address to the graduates so they could contact me and figure out dates of in-depth interviews.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes for 2007.

Aurora Chen
Cranfield School of Management

<https://webmail-outlook/exchange/aurora.chen.phd.04/%E6%94%B6%E4%BB%B6...> 12/01/2007

You replied on 29/12/2006 05:52.

CHEN, AURORA

From: 吳佩珊 [perowu@emba.nccu.edu.tw] **Sent:** Thu 28/12/2006 08:44
To: CHEN, AURORA
Cc:
Subject: Re: A mid-career study of female MBAs
Attachments:

陳司意小姐您好

很抱歉，我聯絡到的幾位學姊都表示忙碌，目前也沒有再回覆。如果再有消息我再email給您！

Best Rgs,
EMBA校友會助理吳佩珊

----- Original Message -----

From: "CHEN, AURORA" <aurora.chen.phd.04@Cranfield.ac.uk>
To: <perowu@emba.nccu.edu.tw>
Sent: Monday, December 25, 2006 9:12 PM
Subject: A mid-career study of female MBAs

吳小姐您好,

很感謝您的幫助!


我研究的主題是有關女性EMBA畢業生的生涯發展, 我希望能訪談貴校93年畢業的女性(30-45歲)仍然在公私企業界擔任管理階層的女性經理人員, 訪談時間大約30-45分鐘, 以比較英國女性EMBA與我國女性EMBA在獲得學位後生涯發展之異同, 若貴校校友們想了解英國之相關訊息, 歡迎隨時與我連絡.

麻煩您將此訊息轉發給貴校93-94畢業之女性EMBA的校友,
我的EMAIL是 aurora.chen.phd.04@cranfield.ac.uk

謝謝!

陳司意
Cranfield School of Management

<https://webmail-outlook/exchange/aurora.chen.phd.04/%E6%94%B6%E4%BB%B6...> 08/01/2007

 You replied on 08/01/2007 10:08.
This message was sent with high importance.
To help protect your privacy, links to images, sounds, or other external content in this message have been blocked. [Click here to unblock content.](#)

CHEN, AURORA

From: Der-Fa [derfa@cm.nsysu.edu.tw] **Sent:** Fri 29/12/2006 02:31
To: CHEN, AURORA
Cc:
Subject: Fw: 急急急.....請老師協助取消 EMBA女性學姊訪談...3Q
Attachments:

Dear Aurora,

I just received the following message from the EMBA office.
Ms. Kuo does not have your phone number so she could not notice you in time about her absence today. Please contact her to rearrange the meeting.

Der-Fa
12-29-2006

Der-Fa Robert Chen, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Business Management
Director, Direct Selling Research Center (DSRC)
Chairman, Chinese Academy of Direct Selling Management
National Sun Yat-Sen University
Kaohsiung, Taiwan 804-24, R.O.C.
<http://www.bm.nsysu.edu.tw>
<http://www.DSRC.nsysu.edu.tw>
北京手機: 137-1774-2986
廣州手機: 137-1042-2731

陳得發
國立中山大學
企業管理學系 教授
直銷學術研發中心 主任
中華直銷管理學會 理事長
804-24高雄市蓮海路70號
Tel: +886-7-525-2000 ext 4621
Fax: +886-7-525-4695
Mobile: +886-929-463-261
上海手機: 138-1835-0964

----- Original Message -----

From: Yi-Pin Chen(陳羿坪)
To: 企-陳得發(bm)
Cc: 郭世寧 EMBA91- 9140305
Sent: Thursday, December 28, 2006 5:13 PM
Subject: 急急急.....請老師協助取消 EMBA女性學姊訪談...3Q

陳得發老師您好:

您的朋友 有與 EMBA 郭世寧學姊 約12/29(五)下午訪談
但因郭學姐臨時有事明天不在辦公室
故要麻煩老師 代為聯繫取消明天訪談時間
敬請見諒!

謝謝老師

Have a nice day!

國立中山大學管理學院
EMBA辦公室
陳羿坪

<https://webmail-outlook/exchange/aurora.chen.phd.04/%E6%94%B6%E4%BB%B6...> 08/01/2007

CHEN, AURORA

From: CHEN, AURORA
To: Cary Wang
Cc:
Subject: RE: A mid-career study of female MBAs
Attachments:

Sent: Tue 26/12/2006 08:57

Will do, Cary. Many thanks for your help!

Happy New Year to you too.

Aurora

From: Cary Wang [mailto:cary@mail.ncku.edu.tw]
Sent: 2006/12/26 [星期二] 上午 02:46
To: CHEN, AURORA
Cc: rlchang@yahoo.com.tw; jessicachen@seed.net.tw; hsma0518@yahoo.com.tw; ann@hanpin.com.tw; mizdalin@yahoo.com.tw
Subject: RE: A mid-career study of female MBAs

Dear all,
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!
Please kindly help Ms. Chen for his project?
(Miss Chen, please contact these outstanding female directly.)
Cary

-----Original Message-----

From: CHEN, AURORA [mailto:aurora.chen.phd.04@cranfield.ac.uk]
Sent: Tuesday, December 26, 2006 9:42 AM
To: cary@mail.ncku.edu.tw
Subject: A mid-career study of female MBAs

Dear Mr Wang

我博士論文研究的主題是有關女性EMBA畢業生的生涯發展,我希望能訪談貴校93年畢業的女性(30-45歲)仍然在公私企業界擔任管理階層的女性經理人員,訪談時間大約30-45分鐘,以比較英國女性EMBA與我國女性EMBA在獲得學位後生涯發展之異同,若貴校校友們想了解英國之就學與就業相關訊息,歡迎隨時與我連絡。

麻煩您將此訊息轉發給貴校93-94畢業之女性EMBA的校友,
我的EMAIL是 aurora.chen.phd.04@cranfield.ac.uk

謝謝!

陳司意
Cranfield School of Management

<https://webmail-outlook/exchange/aurora.chen.phd.04/%E6%94%B6%E4%BB%B6...> 08/01/2007

Appendix C: sample interview transcript

Interview 7 Cranfield School of Management

Name: Kirsty XXXX

Date: 28th August 2006

Time: 15.02-16.18

Place: XXXX Tobacco Limited

Job title: Corporate Responsibility Assurance Manager

Age: 34

Marital status: Married with one child

E-mail: Kirsty.XXXX@uktob.com

Tape starts:

Interviewer: My name is Aurora Chen from Cranfield School of Management. My doctoral research looks at a sample of female Executive MBA graduates and aims to identify career benefits which corporate women gained from taking the MBA. I selected six female graduates from the Cranfield School of Management to participate in the qualitative interviews. This interview has five open questions including three main questions – Before the Executive MBA how did you think that the programme could help to develop your career? What are the career benefits you gained from taking the programme? How have you been using the Executive MBA to advance your career? The first question is to tell me about your career.

Interviewee: OK. I studied mining engineering in Nottingham University. By the time when I finished my degree I went to work for a small software house, initially trained and then wrote software for a hospital administration database. After a year I left the software house, and went back to Nottingham to study for an MSc in mineral resources engineering and management. After that, in 1997, I went to South Africa for three months.

It was a paid placement working underground in Goldfields Gold Mine, which is listed on the UK Stock Exchange. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience in South Africa. My job there was reporting to the training manager. I learnt the duties of the mining engineer, ventilation engineer, health and safety officer, rock mechanic manager, and mine captain. I experienced underground operations in terms of drilling blast patterns, building supports, adhering to health and safety requirements, advancing technical services and loading explosives.

I actually started working for XXXX Tobacco as a technical assistant to the technical director in the hand-rolling division. At the time the company made an acquisition. We became based in the Netherlands for two years. Actually this provided us the experience of organizational change, cost reduction strategy, change management, and process innovations. After a while I progressed to become a team leader for product development liaising between research and development and marketing, managing product development projects. So I started work on a new product development process. During that period, I also followed an internal management development programme. I visited other areas of the business and attended management development courses. The company really treated us well in this regard. Then I returned to the UK in 2000. I joined the cigarette division as a project manager. I

was leading a cross-functional project team to devise the production introduction process and took responsibility to attain ISO 9001 for cigarettes. This involved working with many different functions to map processes and promote the concept of process management. At the same time, I also worked on the development of a company wide project management practice. I was involved in its implementation. In 2002 our business acquired XXXX so we underwent re-organisation. I sat in central manufacturing which had a scope of 32 manufacturing sites. So I worked on changes to the ISO9001 registrations and the redefinition of the product introduction process for the larger business and wider product groups. Is this (the interview) OK?

Interviewer: Yes, definitely.

Interviewee: I started my Executive MBA in 2002. The company sponsored my study. I did my in-company project which determined best-practice approach for ISO 9001 implementation. At work we developed a toolbox for building management systems. Whilst I was studying my MBA at Cranfield, I was promoted to be quality manager, which was great. I was responsible for an implementation programme to roll out ISO 9001 globally to all our manufacturing sites. We also had a central manufacturing registration to capture all business processes and support the concept of business quality rather than just product quality. I got married after completing my MBA. I had a baby son in 2005. I took a year's maternity leave. When I came back I was successful in applying for a new role based in corporate affairs head office. It is a role of corporate responsibility assurance manager. This is what I am doing now. Without the MBA, I wouldn't have had a chance to be promoted and become an important member of the company.

Interviewer: Before the Executive MBA how did you think that the MBA could help to develop your career?

Interviewee: A main driver for doing the Executive MBA was that I was extremely frustrated at the amount of effort I was putting into work, for example, traveling abroad a lot, taking on many additional responsibilities and achieving results. This was reflected in very good feedback in appraisals but my career was progressing more slowly than other similar-level colleagues. So I asked to do the MBA which the company agreed I could do and that they would wholly fund.

One thing which was very important at that stage was personal development. I needed confidence. I needed knowing how to communicate with different people and how to leverage my strengths so I could minimize my weaknesses. At work level, I wanted to improve my credibility within the professional workplace leading to more responsibility. I also wanted to understand business better with the view that one day I might set up my own company. I think it might offer me an option to leave this company. I was also thinking that having an Executive MBA might provide the opportunity to work in new business areas such as marketing. I also wanted to improve understanding of other business areas – drivers and constraints. Also, it's a way to signal to management that I am hard working and ambitious.

Interviewer: Why did you choose to take the Executive MBA programme at Cranfield?

Interviewee: I actually did a bit of research on the programmes offered by both LBS and Cranfield. I found the personal development programme at Cranfield much better than at the LBS. Cranfield has a management school's reputation. They have world-class lecturers. Also, it was not far from where I lived at that time - I lived in Nottingham. I was impressed by the use of team-working as a development tool when I was on the course. I was particularly interested in psychology, systems thinking and how the numbers stacked up. Finance was a surprise as I found it more of an art rather than simple number crunching. The subjects I really found interesting were organizational behaviour, managing personal effectiveness, strategy, and all sorts of subjects which I found interesting. Financial management was interesting too.

Interviewer: Any other forces behind your decision to study for the Executive MBA?

Interviewee: I am the kind of person who enjoys learning and academia. I respect fellow colleagues who had completed an MBA. I wanted to participate in an intellectual hub and meet similar-minded people. On the MBA at Cranfield, I actually made some friends.

Interviewer: So what are the career benefits which you have gained from taking the Executive MBA?

Interviewee: OK. Benefits – I am more personally satisfied and less stressed. Now I have a greater perspective and try to see where other colleagues are coming from. My pay was increased when I was promoted to this job, the corporate responsibility assurance manager. The company paid my relocation package when I

moved here (Bristol) from Nottingham. I am now in senior management. I also found increased respect in the workplace. This might be linked to my achievements in the workplace and the reputation I have created over the years or just my increased confidence. In terms of confidence, I think the challenge that the Executive MBA gave me has enabled me to think better on my feet, and when challenged in the workplace I am able to give the confrontation intellectual consideration before delivering a response. Before I would have felt more pressured especially by people more senior than me. Also, the Executive MBA has enabled me to identify when others are not confident in what they say and to assess the work quality of others. I have also been able to better allocate peoples' skill sets to appropriate tasks.

Interviewer: Could you give me an example about increased confidence?

Interviewee: I am less stressed by the organizational culture now. I know how to use it to my advantage rather than fighting against it. For example, the project I am running to define the CR strategy has included a note on the working environment in which we work and the constraints under which middle management work. I recognize that to succeed in any change management programme we need strong communications and support from the formal decision making processes such as objective setting and management bonus scheme. If the project is not given this support I will not waste time and resource pursuing unachievable objectives but work on issues which are better aligned with the overall strategy and will get recognition. Now I can do better presentations with power point. I can say what I know and admit what I don't know. I am also ready to take on responsibility on issues I know initially nothing about. I feel that I have the capacity to learn and then to use that information to perform.

Interviewer: How have you been using the Executive MBA to advance your career?

Interviewee: I sometimes mention that I have done the Executive MBA but I don't use it like a badge. I don't think the MBA is everything. The Executive MBA definitely supports my experience and signals determination. I feel career advancement will depend more on reputation management and delivery of results.

Interviewer: Could you tell me more details about your current job and how the Executive MBA helps your role?

Interviewee: The role of the CR assurance manager is to primarily understand the Group's past conduct with a view to supporting industry and public affairs personnel or any senior management who may be required to defend the company's reputation based on past events. There is interface with the corporate lawyers.

My key responsibilities in this job are to understand and to articulate the record of the Group conduct on science, tobacco and general issues. I offer my advice and help to educate relevant personnel, representing the Group externally as appropriate, including under oath. My job is also to liaise with the Group records manager on ITG and acquired company documentation, including third-party records, and to liaise with the legal and public affairs functions, external advisors and analysts on a broad range of issues, including the content of the Group positions. I also provide professional advice and contribute to strategy development based on Group past conduct. I have additional responsibilities, including reviewing the departmental budget, being a member of the corporate affairs divisional project steering group, project managing the determination of our next 3-year corporate responsibility strategy and coaching new management members. This involves managing an internal team and liaising with external consultants and non-governmental organisations.

I think that the Executive MBA assists with my job on a number of levels. The first level is to analyse the company records with a view to determining what is relevant and significant in terms of group conduct. Well, the second level is to build the context in which the group conducted itself by understanding the short-term and longer-term commercial pressures at the time. Then the third one is to determine the organizational culture and how it evolves. Apart from those, on a much higher level, I can understand a wide group of issues and how they interact, for example, financial pressures, commercial pressures, political objectives and powers, product development and market constraints. I can understand application of macro-economics on the business environment and strategic analysis.

Now I also have better practical skills.

Interviewer: Could you let me know what practical skills are?

Interviewee: OK. I think that I have increased awareness about my career as well as confidence. I have increased understanding of different business areas leading to improved credibility, and also financial management bits. I think that I have improved communication skills. I can identify different working styles and how to manage them. I am able to analyse team dynamics as well.

I love challenges. I like to set myself a new achievement to see whether I am progressing so I could feel whether I do my job well. I am able to direct others by sharing understanding and explaining expectations. I can liaise with contacts to make the best use of different talents and expert knowledge which gives me confidence.

Interviewer: How is your career likely to develop?

Interviewee: I am pretty confident to say that I aim to take on an executive role. At the moment this is likely to be the head of CR, which is my boss's job. This is within the next three or five years. My boss is supportive of this ambition and gives me relevant experience when possible. At present I am not sure I wish to progress higher than this in this organisation because of the pressures it would put on my home life. This may change in future. I am also mindful I could do with some more commercial experience either back in manufacturing or in marketing. One option would be to do a project or secondment in business development or commercial risk. I have raised this within my appraisal. There is also the possibility I could leave the company – this could result if we were acquired – there have been rumors in the past. If so, consultancy is an option, or a senior position in a smaller company. I still have the idea of running my own business but this would be when the mortgage is smaller and I have a larger risk appetite. This would likely be a lifestyle business rather than a huge money spinner. I enjoy my job at XXXX Tobacco and I like the company culture. It's not 100 per cent perfect but no place is. The challenges that a 'tobacco' company face are particularly interesting.

Interviewer: Is it OK if you could tell me a bit about your family?

Interviewee: At the time of my Executive MBA I lived with my partner. He was supportive in terms of giving me time and space to do the study and he coped with my bad moods when I was under pressure or needed to let off steam. We have since married and had a baby. My husband has a BSc and he is a project manager in construction. We have both worked away from home with our jobs. I think this helped his understanding.

My parents were proud of me when I took the Executive MBA. I have a younger sister. I was 28 when I started (EMBA) and she was 26. We both have master's degrees. Hers is in fine art. My family is all supportive of my career. Having a baby was a huge change but I think doing the MBA was good preparation! I returned to work after 12 months' maternity leave while my husband took one-year career break to look after our son. My husband will return to work when our son is 18 months. We have

found a local day-nanny who will help us. My employer is also very supportive of my home-life commitments. I have flexible working hours and a work-from-home option.

Interviewer: Before we finish this interview, is there anything else you want to add about the career benefits which you have acquired from taking the Executive MBA programme?

Interviewee: Again, I would say that I am more confident and less stressed. I am taking a senior role in the company. Confidence is what I expected to get from the MBA.

I think that the Executive MBA has improved my research skills and improved my understanding of the world in which we live. I think it's a useful course in many aspects of life as really business is about managing relationships with people. This extends to my friends and family.

I enjoy travel having worked within the enlarged European Union. I visited China on a study tour when I was doing the Executive MBA. I have taken holidays in different parts of the world because I like to be physically active. I have completed five half-marathons. I am a qualified international open water diver. I enjoyed several skiing holidays. I like to spend time gardening, reading, entertaining and listening to music when at home. I have e-mail contacts with my fellow MBA friends in my learning group.

Interviewer: Thank you for giving me a chance to interview you, Kirsty.

Interviewee: My pleasure.

End of tape

Appendix D: the coding framework from QSR NVivo version 7.0

